



# Shakespeare's Paralytic Characters

## Citation

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Shakespeare's Paralytic Characters

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A Thesis in the Field of English  
for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

Harvard University

May 2016



## Abstract

This thesis straddles the intersection of two contemporary topics in Shakespeare scholarship: the newly resurrected practice of character criticism and Shakespeare's use of meta-rhetorical principles to inform his dramaturgy. The goal of this study is to illustrate how Shakespeare may have used the effect inherent in paralipsis, a rhetorical device he relied on heavily, to craft four often overlooked characters and punctuate the themes of their respective plays. Since the power of paralipsis comes in the trope's ability to draw attention to something's absence, suddenly the omitted Falstaff in *Henry V*, the neglected Cicero in *Julius Caesar*, the marginalized Fortinbras in *Hamlet*, and the abandoned Fool in *King Lear* all take on a greater significance when examined through a paraliptic lens.

For the better part of the last four hundred years, the absences of these seemingly disposable characters have received scant critical attention, and the paltriness of these parts has rarely been granted any artistic merit; instead, the underwhelming – or, in the case of Falstaff in *Henry V*, nonexistent – roles of these four characters and their unexpected disappearances have long been ascribed to theatrical economy or Shakespeare's assumed inattentiveness as a playwright. I will contend, though, that these seemingly shallow roles gain considerable depth and dimension when examined paraliptically, and that Shakespeare's application of this meta-rhetorical effect in crafting these characters fits with his development as artist in the middle part of his career. Therefore, by rooting this study in the long history of inferential character criticism and

the mounting research in meta-rhetorical theory, I will examine the centuries of criticism surrounding these four characters, will execute a close reading of their parts, and, in an attempt to find symbolic value in their marginality, will explore the gaping voids their absences leave in their respective plays. By pressing these gaps, this thesis concludes that there is more than meets the eye with these four characters, and when studied paraliptically, they each serve as foils for their protagonists, manipulate Renaissance expectations of character types, and underscore their respective plays' themes.

To Professor Gordon Teskey –

It was your course that sparked the idea for this thesis,  
and it was your encouragement that accelerated the ensuing blaze.

Thank you, muse of fire.

## Acknowledgements

I am a considerably fortunate individual, and I have been grateful to have such wonderful family members, friends, and mentors in every aspect of my life as I have worked toward this goal over the last six years. I owe much to Kashina Cusson and Dr. Christopher Quinn. Both are champions of education who have allowed me the flexibility to earn my degree while maintaining a career and advancing professionally. Of course, I am also grateful for my scholarly shepherd, Dr. Talaya Delaney, who has guided me through the technical aspects of this process and gave me the freedom to push my academic boundaries while never letting me wander too far astray. Her mentorship has been invaluable. I also extend great appreciation to all of the faculty members I have learned from during my time at Harvard, particularly Dr. Gordon Teskey, to whom this thesis is dedicated. They have all further cemented my desire to be a life-long learner in the humanities. Susan Gilroy and the Harvard University Library staff must be recognized, too – this accomplishment would not have been possible without them. I would be remiss if I did not thank Linda Horn, as well, for her constant, engaging, and genuine interest in my progress over the last six years. Even at times when I was overwhelmed or disjointed in my writing process, Linda's enthusiasm and support for my work endured and kept me motivated.

To me, Shakespeare's genius is most evident in the way he can give words to emotions and sentiments that are otherwise incommunicable. Once more, I find myself in awe of his talent as I try to express the impossible: my indescribable gratitude and love

for my parents, Mary and Ray Deschenes. Here, I am reminded of Cordelia's difficulty in expressing her parental love at lines 77-8 in act 1, scene 1, of *King Lear*: "my love's / More ponderous than my tongue!" A catalog of their kind gestures, generous gifts, and words of encouragement during this process – along with the occasional clerical assist – would rival the length of this thesis, as would my attempt to express my gratitude to them in writing. In short, I am proud to be your son, and any accomplishment I have had in my life can be attributed to the work ethic that you instilled in me as a child and the willingness to dream that you continue to foster in me to this day. With tremendous gratefulness and admiration, I thank you both.



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## Chapter I

### The Return of Character Criticism

When asked to predict forthcoming trends in Shakespearean criticism, Marjorie Garber, author of *Shakespeare After All*, answers with a theory she has witnessed to be true time and again in her forty years of Shakespeare scholarship: whatever strand of literary theory is most “out” is on the verge of coming back “in,” and whatever mode seems most antiquated and exhausted will suddenly give way to mountains of exciting new perspectives and analyses. She most recently reiterated this theory when delivering her *Occupy Shakespeare* speech at the Aspen Institute in July 2014, citing character criticism as one of the methods of literary analysis that has been undergoing a resurrection of late (33:06). If Garber’s observation on the cyclical nature of Shakespeare studies is an accurate one, then character criticism, the earliest strand of Shakespearean criticism – and one of the most contested and controversial – is certainly due for a thriving revival.

Studying characters to garner a deeper understanding of a text existed well before Shakespeare, as John Bligh notes in his 1984 essay “Shakespeare Character Study to 1800.” Character analysis had long been established as “one of the principal divisions of dramatic criticism, corresponding to the second of the six parts, elements, or constituents, of drama distinguished by Aristotle” (141) in *Poetics*, and Shakespeare’s predecessors such as Homer, Virgil, Chaucer, Spenser, and Marlowe were in part judged by how they portrayed their characters. However, to many neoclassical critics in the seventeenth and

eighteenth centuries, Shakespeare's *dramatis personae* seemed to contradict the long-standing Aristotelian expectations of character, and this led to a number of negative assessments of his facility as a playwright, particularly in his failure to create characters that are, to meet Aristotle's criteria, "apparent (i.e. distinct or easily recognizable); true to type; true to tradition; and consistent" (144).

These criticisms elicited a rebuttal from Shakespeare's admirers who came to his defense suggesting, as Margaret Cavendish first asserted in her *Sociable Letters* (1664), that Shakespeare's "wit and eloquence" are most evident in his ability to create empathetic and engaging characters, for "he Presents Passions so Naturally, and Misfortunes so Probably, as he Peirces the Souls of his Readers with such a True Sense and Feeling" (130). To apologists and enthusiasts like Cavendish, it was Shakespeare's seemingly nonconforming character-craft and the resultant multi-dimensional characters that made him such a talented playwright. Samuel Johnson said as much when he deemed Shakespeare's characters "compositions of a distinct kind, exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination," in spite of flying "contrary to the rules of criticism" (19). For the next 250 years, seminal works by other champions of Shakespeare's characters, particularly Alexander Pope; Elizabeth Montagu; William Richardson; Maurice Morgann; Thomas Whatley; Samuel Taylor Coleridge; August von Schlegel; William Hazlitt; Anna Jameson; and A.C. Bradley, dominated Shakespearean criticism and elevated Shakespeare beyond his predecessors, contemporaries, and successors to become England's national poet and the world's greatest playwright.

Toward the turn of the nineteenth century, though, character critics began shifting their attention away from the characters as Shakespeare presented them to instead focus more on the omitted aspects of his characters, looking beyond details provided in the text to explore gaps in characters' backgrounds, motivations, and actions in an attempt to grasp a better understanding of Shakespeare's intent. This movement toward inferential readings marked a change in trajectory for Shakespearean literary analysis: traditional, Aristotelian character *study* now gave way to the wildly innovative and soon to be prolific mode known as character *criticism*, the foundational school of criticism that served as the basis of Shakespeare studies from the late-1700s to the early-1900s. Maurice Morgann is credited with this shift. In his 1777 *Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff* – the “locus classicus” (*Character* 202) of character criticism, according to L.C. Knights – Morgann puts forth the idea that Shakespeare's characters are purposefully left incomplete, thus requiring audiences and readers to surmise the missing parts of the whole.

“I affirm,” writes Morgann, “that those characters in *Shakespeare*, which are seen only in part, are yet capable of being unfolded and understood in the whole; every part being in fact relative, and inferring all the rest.”<sup>1</sup> He continues, “[Shakespeare] boldly makes a character act and speak from those parts of the composition which are *inferred* only, and not distinctly shewn... and when occasion requires, [we must] account for their conduct from the *whole* of character, from general principles, from latent motives, and from policies not avowed.” To Morgann, this is Shakespeare's purest “art,” and he believes this reliance in an audience's ability to participate through inferring meaning exemplifies “the highest point of Poetic composition” (61-2).

Morgann was hailed as a “morning star among Shakespeare critics” for this fresh approach of exploring omission, and he was credited for being “*the* pioneer” of character criticism, “a casual roamer in the Shakespearian forest, who got sight of some things before the scientific discoverers came along to map its dells and hills, its flora and fauna” (O’N. 914-5). Morgann’s influence pulsed through the Romantics. He may be credited as “the founder and prophet of the Hazlitt-Coleridge-De Quincey school of criticism” (Tave 372), and he inspired eighteenth-and nineteenth-century Shakespearean authorities from A. W. Schlegel to Immanuel Kant to even Goethe (Bligh 143-50). However, no critic was more inspired by Morgann than A.C. Bradley, the other bookend of the school of character criticism and the author of its culminating work, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904).

Bradley declared of Morgann’s essay, “there is no better piece of Shakespearian criticism in the world” (“Estimates” 291). Morgann’s theory of exploring omitted aspects of character to extract Shakespeare’s potential intent served as the basis for Bradley’s influential *Shakespearean Tragedy*, and, detective-like, Bradley delves deeply into the gaps of Shakespeare’s greatest plays and their protagonists: *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*. Certainly, Bradley takes Morgann’s suggested inferential approach farther than any prior critic:

[Characters] do not merely inspire in us emotions of unusual strength, but they also stir the intellect to wonder and speculation. How can there be such men and women? We ask ourselves. How comes it that humanity can take such absolutely opposite forms? And, in particular, to what omissions of elements which should be present in human nature, or, if there is no omission, to what distortion of these elements is it due that such beings as some of these come to exist?... And more, it seems to us that [Shakespeare] himself is asking this question. (242-3)

Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy* is unquestionably one of the most influential works – if not *the* most influential work – in the long canon of Shakespeare scholarship, and it signaled the apex of the school of character criticism. However, Bradley pushed the mode to its extreme, and by the mid-1900s, character criticism had splintered and spawned new and more modern modes of criticism – particularly psychoanalysis, feminist readings, performance study, and textual criticism, among others – that merely used character as an entry point, not as a main focus. Now issues of identity, language, and imagery – not character – ushered in a wave of “new” criticism, and in light of these fresh approaches and perspectives, the type of holistic and speculative character study that had dominated Shakespeare criticism for so long quickly lost its influence.

G. Wilson Knight, F.R. Leavis, and L.C. Knights were three of the more influential authorities in the movement away from character criticism in the 1930s, and their derision of this form of inferential analysis led to its quick fall from fashion and resultant obsolescence. G. Wilson Knight and his *The Wheel of Fire* (1930) eviscerated the practice, concluding that character study was a form of “false criticism” (9) and declaring that Shakespearean commentators who practiced it lacked “the requisite emotional sympathy and agility of intellect” (11) necessary to truly understand Shakespeare's plays. The inferential nature of character criticism, Knight professed, is corrupt because, “whatever elements lend themselves most readily to analysis..., these [the critic] selects, roots out, distorting their natural growth;... [and] searches everywhere for the ‘causes’” (11-2).

Equally vitriolic, F.R. Leavis loathed Bradley and the practice of character criticism. In his attack on Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy*, Leavis stated that Bradley

was bereft of “moderate intelligence,” propagated “misdirected scrupulosity,” and was “completely wrong-headed – grossly and palpably false to the evidence” and “a very potent and mischievous influence” (136-7). Leavis’s colleague L.C. Knights, perhaps the most commonly associated of the three with the movement away from character criticism, denounced the practice since “the detective interest supersedes the critical.” To Knights, character criticism had become too prevalent: “Not only are all the books of Shakespeare criticism (with very few exceptions) based upon it, it invades scholarship..., and in school children are taught to think they have ‘appreciated’ the poet if they are able to talk about the characters” (“Children” 272-3).

Knights traced character criticism back to when it splintered from Aristotelian character study:

More than any other man, it seems to me, Morgann has deflected Shakespeare criticism from the proper objects of attention by his preposterous references to those aspects of a ‘character’ that Shakespeare did not wish to show. He made explicit the assumption on which the other eighteenth-century critics based their work, and that assumption has been pervasive until our own time. (281-2)

He continued his assault on character criticism in his later essay “The Question of Character in Shakespeare” (1959):

Once ‘character’-criticism became the dominant mode of approach to Shakespeare, certain important matters were necessarily obscured, and people’s experience of Shakespeare became in some ways less rich and satisfying than it might have been. For one thing, genuine perceptions became entangled with irrelevant speculations... [and] if the critic who accepts too naively the character-in-action formula is liable to disappear down by-paths outside the play, he is almost equally likely to slight or ignore what is actually there if it does not minister to his particular preoccupation. (204)

In 1959, twenty-six years after the publication of “How Many Children had Lady Macbeth?,” a piece he admits was aimed at parodying A.C. Bradley and the practice of

character criticism – Lady Macbeth, of course, had no living children in *Macbeth* –, Knights assessed the contemporary landscape of Shakespeare criticism and confidently stated, “I think we should agree that there have been some books offering genuinely new insights, and that where criticism has been most illuminating it has usually been on quite non-Bradleyan lines” (“Character” 208). And for the remainder of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first, few authoritative critics with the exceptions of A.D. Nuttall and Harold Bloom would venture into the realm of Morgann / Bradleyan character criticism for fear of ridicule and critical rejection; however, Bloom and Nuttall never stopped promoting the merits of this bygone approach.

Bloom’s *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (1998), written nearly one hundred years after the publication of Bradley’s *Shakespearean Tragedy*, is seemingly a seven-hundred-page defense of character criticism applied across all of Shakespeare’s plays. Declaring himself the descendent of character critics who preceded him, Bloom often invokes the names of his predecessors, including Maurice Morgann, William Hazlitt, and A.C. Bradley, and he perpetuates their belief that “most of Shakespeare’s mature plays implicitly demand that we provide them with a particular foreground, which we can arrive at by a kind of inference” (272). “Inference,” Bloom continues, “as first practiced by Maurice Morgann in the eighteenth century, and refined by A.D. Nuttall in our era, is the mode offered us by Shakespeare himself” (290).

Considering omitted elements as entries into Shakespeare’s plays, Bloom’s *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* explored the details that Shakespeare grants us about his lead characters to plumb the details that remain withheld. Bloom delved deeply into character gaps and explored Shakespeare’s artful ambiguities to sound their potential



and tease out possible new readings. “What are Antony and Cleopatra like when they are alone together?” he wonders. “Why are Macbeth and his fierce lady childless?” “What is it that so afflicts Prospero, and causes him to abandon his magical powers, and to say that in his recovered realm every third thought shall be of his grave” (738)? Careful not to become too indulgent – part of character criticism’s downfall, of course, was the mode’s ability to make nearly *any* reading possible – Bloom supports his theses in a strong historical background and a rich textual foreground. His ultimate argument, an echo of the great character critics who preceded him, is that “Shakespeare invents... a mode of representation that depends... upon the audience to surmise just how Falstaff and Hamlet and Edmund got to be the way they are” (737-8).

Like Bloom, A.D. Nuttall never missed an opportunity to attempt to rehabilitate the practice of character criticism. In his book *Shakespeare the Thinker* (2007), Nuttall declared:

L.C. Knights in his immensely influential essay, “How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?” said it was logically absurd to make inferences about [characters]. In fact audiences guess and hypothesize all the time, and good dramatists rely on the fact. The earlier critic A.C. Bradley, predictably derided by Knights, felt no such restraint. Now that the dust has settled it is clear that Bradley was a better critic of Shakespeare than Knights. Shakespeare excels at characterization. (46)

Regardless of their steadfast defenses of character criticism, both Nuttall and Bloom realized that they were the last in a long line of character critics, and both admitted to fighting a battle that had been lost long ago. In his book *A New Mimesis* (1983), for example, Nuttall resignedly admits that “the ill-made shaft” of L. C. Knights and the opponents of Morgann / Bradleyan criticism “misses both Shakespeare and Bradley, and falls on stony ground. But the stony ground, it must be confessed, received

it with joy” (83). Similarly defeated, Bloom admits at the turn of the century in *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* that the character criticism of Morgann and Bradley is “light-years away from nearly all current interpretation(s) of Shakespeare” (291), and in his introduction, he puts forth the realization that the book he has produced propagates “a tradition that is now mostly out of fashion” (xx).

Yet, today, Marjorie Garber’s prophetic theory on the cyclical nature of Shakespearean criticism seems apropos once more, explaining the recent resurgence of character criticism that has been receiving academic attention and acceptance of late. In 2009, for example, *Shakespeare and Character*, a compendium of contemporary essays gathered by editors Paul Yachnin and Jessica Slights, was published and aimed to “provide a new critical vocabulary for character study... [to] emphasize the interrelationship between theory and the particular by connecting theories and histories of the idea of character to concrete, detailed accounts of particular characters as they emerge in the text and on the stage” (flap). To Yachnin, Slights, and their contributors, “character is the organizing principle of Shakespeare’s plays... [and] character is the principal bridge over which the emotional, cognitive, and political transactions... pass between actors and playgoers or between written texts and readers” (7).

In the six years since the publication of Yachnin and Slights’s *Shakespeare and Character*, a revival of character study has been slowly gaining momentum, to the point that it received considerable attention in the December 2013 *Shakespeare Survey* annual chapter, “The Year’s Contributions to Shakespeare Studies.” In this retrospective of the most influential Shakespeare theoretical movements of the year, reviewer Charlotte Scott highlighted Lorna Hutson’s essay “Law, Probability, and Character in Shakespeare,” and

echoed Hutson's declaration that "character has made a comeback" (415). Positioned between her examinations of "global Shakespeare" in light of the 2012 London Summer Olympics and the perennially popular topic of Shakespeare and sexuality, Scott analyzed the recent resurgence of character study, giving particular attention to Raphael Lyne's *Shakespeare, Rhetoric, and Cognition* (2011). Scott believes that Lyne's thesis – that we ought to "take notice of character" (415) and "give characters a large stake, and great credit, for their words and what they represent" (416) – was worthy of inclusion in her short list of critical movements that deserved recognition in her year-end review.

Perhaps the most recent example of character criticism's revival is the opening chapter to Julie Sanders's *The Cambridge Introduction to Early Modern Drama, 1576-1642*, published in 2014. In it, Sanders suggests:

[T]he time is perhaps ripe to reclaim early modern character studies from this particular negative association and a number of critics are beginning that important work by revisiting characters as 'types' and typologies or simply by authoring rich and suggestive studies of individual parts or roles. In this kind of extended study—one that looks at character from a range of angles rather than simply advancing a singular notion of psychology partly derived from the realist novel – we begin to comprehend ways in which individual dramatic creations are a means for early modern playwrights to explore cultural and political concerns and to develop and sometimes (often) to manipulate and exploit a relationship with the audience. This in turn provides insight into these playwrights' personalized and often collaborative approach to dramaturgy and aesthetics. Through individual character studies we can make sense of particular metaphorical associations they conjure.... (27)

In this thesis, I aim to be one of those contemporary critics that Sanders cites as engaging in the important work of reviving character criticism, and I believe there is fertile ground if the practices of character study, appropriately rooted and tested, are refocused on characters that have never before been examined under such inferential scrutiny. Yachnin and Slights and Lynn seem to agree: in *Shakespeare and Character*,

the likes of King John, Autolycus, Hermione, and Titus are examined; in *Shakespeare, Rhetoric, and Cognition*, the main characters in *Cymbeline* receive their own chapter. However, these characters, like the ones that were the focus of prior character studies, have substantial roles in their respective plays. My thesis will instead shift the lens of character criticism to four characters who will be defined in the next chapter as *paralyptic*<sup>2</sup> characters: in short, seemingly neglected characters who, though they appear to be marginalized or abandoned by Shakespeare, are in fact significant and function more effectively – and artfully – in their absences or diminutions.

Here, it should be noted that this study is not an extension of M. M. Mahood's *Playing Bit Parts in Shakespeare* (1992) – a companion piece, maybe, but not a thesis that aims to catalog the economical functions of “First, Second, and Third Messengers, Citizens, and Soldiers; a host of gardeners and gaolers, knights and heralds, ladies-in-waiting, murderers and mariners; the odd day-woman, haberdasher, poet, vintner, hangman, scrivener, king, cardinal, and goddess; John Bates, Tom Snout, George Seacole, Simon Catling, Peter Thump, Neighbour Mugs; and four men who are all called Balthasar” (1). Mahood's book is an impressive collection and analysis of several hundred “bit” parts in Shakespeare's plays, and its intent is to be “an invaluable aid to directors and actors in the rehearsal room” that “explores the different functions of these minimal characters” (back cover) and combats the notion that “minimal roles in Elizabethan plays were perfunctorily acted... and bit-part actors were for the most part subservient members of the company” (10).

Focusing on the theatrical potential of these characters and the mechanical function they serve in Shakespeare's plays, Mahood uses his study to address the

importance of body language in bit and walk-on parts, the potential for “bonus” stage business to be extracted from these small roles, the impact of costume and make-up on these characters, and their ability to “spring to life in a single part” or form “collective noises of assent or hostility” (3-4). Mahood’s thesis is to explore “the range of functions such figures can perform” (21) and to comfort “the actor of a walk-on part... with the thought that at least he is not one of those characters whom Shakespeare, out of practical considerations, keeps behind the scenes... designated as speaking ‘within’” (5).

Instead, this study aims to provide an artistic appreciation for these four abandoned characters beyond their mere economical / mechanical functions, suggesting, as Alex Woloch does in his book *The One vs. the Many* (1998), that every character introduced in a work of literature has value, no matter how insignificant they may seem. Woloch asserts that *any* character introduced by an author is meaningful, which is a marked departure in philosophy from many of the leading Shakespeare critics discussed later in this thesis. The axiom for his entire study is, “How can a human being enter into a narrative world and *not* disrupt the distribution of attention” (26)? My axiom is somewhat similar, though I shall focus on characters causing disruptions by *exiting* narrative worlds rather than entering them.

At the heart of his argument, Woloch declares:

If “minor characters” were *literally* minor in the normative sense of this word – ‘Comparatively small or unimportant; not to be reckoned among the greater or principal individuals of the kind’ (*Oxford English Dictionary*) – the term itself would never have been formulated or deployed so often in literary criticism and evaluation.

Minor characters exist *as* a category, then, only because of their strange centrality to so many texts, perhaps to narrative signification itself.... In one sense, certainly, the minor character stands out because the writer has done a lot with a little: illuminated that one scene, those few lines, that one pivotal moment in which the character appears.... But the

minor character's interesting distinction cannot be based simply on the brief moment during which he stands out; in fact, it is precisely the opposite. The minor character is always drowned out within the totality of the narrative; and what we remember about the character is never detached from how the text, for the most part, makes us forget him. . . .

The strange significance of minor characters, in other words, resides largely in the way that the character disappears, and in the tension or relief that results from this vanishing. These feelings are often solicited by the narrative, and it is the disappearance of the minor character (for *every* minor character does – by strict definition – disappear) that, finally, is integrated into his or her interesting speech or memorable gesture. We feel interest and outrage, painful concern or amused consent at what happens to minor characters: not simply their fate within the story . . . but also in the narrative discourse itself. (37-8)

Woloch's theory that the significance of a minor character "resides largely in the way that the character disappears, and in the tension or relief that results from this vanishing" is similar to mine; however, here an important distinction must be made.

Woloch concludes, "But this is not to say that once we acknowledge the significance of the minor character, he suddenly becomes major, breaking out of his subordinate position in the narrative discourse" (37). Though the four roles that will be examined in this thesis – Falstaff in *Henry V*, Cicero in *Julius Caesar*, Fortinbras in *Hamlet*, and the Fool in *King Lear* – are seemingly auxiliary, and in the case of Falstaff in *Henry V*, nonexistent, they are not *minor* characters. On the contrary, these paraliptic characters are carefully crafted to have deep significance in their respective plays, and I will argue that they are *major* characters, despite their discarded roles, particularly in the way that Shakespeare introduces each one as a foil for the protagonists of their respective plays, established on the same levels as the likes of Prince Hal, Caesar, Brutus, Hamlet, and Lear.

In the tradition of Morgan, the Romantics, Bradley, Bloom, Nuttall, Yachnin, Slights, Hutson, Lyne, and the long line of character critics that have come before, my

thesis will examine Falstaff, Cicero, Fortinbras, and the Fool not as the literal rude mechanicals – the mere gears and bolts that Mahood assembles – nor as the minor characters that Woloch would call them, but as major characters whose glaring absences and seeming marginality provide fertile and gaping chasms to be pressed and explored, a new section of that Shakespearian forest that still needs its dells and hills, its flora and fauna mapped. Shakespeare has so firmly grounded each one of these four paraliptic characters that their subsequent dismissals speak volumes, and I will argue that they are each artistically integral and proper to their respective plays, not auxiliary, and all function symbolically and poignantly in absentia. Like the ghost of Old Hamlet, the spirit of these four roles haunt their plays and manifest at the most evocative of times, refusing to be forgotten and urging us, the audience, to “lend thy serious hearing to what [they] shall unfold” (*Hamlet* 1.5.5-6).<sup>3</sup>

## Chapter II

### Paralipsis: Characters Left to One Side

Just as character criticism encourages readers to draw conclusions from details that are ambiguous or omitted, so too does the rhetorical device paralipsis. A rhetorical scheme with roots in Greek oration and literature, the term “paralipsis” derives from the Greek prefix “para-,” which means “to one side,” combined with the root “leipein,” which means “to leave,” and the verbal suffix “-sis,” which denotes action: literally, “a leaving to one side” (“Paralipsis,” *Dictionary.com*). In its full rhetorical sense, paralipsis is the act of emphasizing or drawing attention to something by saying little or nothing about it or affecting to dismiss it (“Paralipsis,” *OED*). The power of paralipsis lies in its subtlety: it allows an author or orator to say something without explicitly having to say it; or, as Sister Miriam Joseph says in *Shakespeare’s Use of the Arts of Language* (1947), “while pretending to pass over a matter, [it is told] most effectively” (139). “In seeming to withhold, one tells all” (285), and “in the very show of pretending to pass over a certain matter tells it nonetheless” (325).

Paralipsis is somewhat theatrical in its implementation. Note the words “affecting,” “seeming,” and “pretending” in its definitions. Paralipsis makes an intentional spectacle of something before diverting attention away from it. By denying audiences and readers of that recently established focal point, paralipsis forces them to notice the absence and ponder the void left behind, requiring them to draw meaningful conclusions from the glaring emptiness. It is, somewhat, an art of imposed frustration and



subsequent intrigue. The absence is purposeful and powerful, and a carefully executed example of paralipsis by a master rhetorician is hard for an attentive audience to miss.

Similar to the jazz adage that “it’s the notes that *aren’t* played that matter,” the ideas of “presence-in-absence” and “negative narration” have been closely associated with literature for centuries. Many of the greatest authors, poets, and dramatists have spoken most loudly in what they have left *un*-said, and readers and audiences find inference as integral to comprehending literature as the concrete words on the page. Remember A. D. Nuttall’s defense of character criticism: “audiences guess and hypothesize all the time, and good dramatists rely on the fact” (*Thinker* 48). Nuttall suggested that human nature programs us to “legitimately indulge in inference and supposition” when reading a text or watching a play, and any “presumption that humane inference is inapplicable to drama is simply mistaken... [and a] dramatist faced with an entire audience who austere­ly repressed all inferences and bayed for image-patterns might well despair” (*Mimesis* 82). Great rhetoricians knew this, just as the greatest poets, playwrights, and novelists did, and just as Shakespeare certainly knew it.

Shakespeare was a master of rhetoric and its myriad forms. Though he never attended university like contemporary playwrights Christopher Marlowe, Robert Greene, Thomas Nash, George Peele, and Thomas Lodge, Shakespeare’s primary education at grammar school revolved around rhetoric and gave him the foundation upon which he would later prove himself to be, as Russ McDonald claims in *Shakespeare and the Arts of Language* (2001), “the ideal student of Renaissance rhetoric” (48). Not being indoctrinated in the university system like his contemporary “wits” may have allowed Shakespeare to maintain a willingness and enthusiasm for experimenting with the

boundaries of rhetoric: he seems to have been less constrained by its rigid rules than his fellow poets and playwrights. Had he gone on to university, Lois Potter wonders whether or not he would have “spent his career writing Latin elegies on Stratford aldermen” (32), a far more prosaic and expected practice of university-trained rhetoricians, rather than transforming our language and literature by demonstrating how rhetoric can be manipulated and transcendent.

For eleven hours a day, 325 days a year, Shakespeare’s childhood was spent learning rhetoric from multiple sixteenth-century grammar books (Burgess 31). Daily activities required copying text and oratorically imitating masters such as Cicero, Erasmus, Vergil, Ovid, Terence, Horace, and Quintilian. From constant repetition and practice – and the all-too-common beating from a schoolmaster when errors were made – Shakespeare and his young schoolmates would learn Latin rhetoric from sunrise to sunset. This is because, as Anthony Burgess noted in his biography of Shakespeare, “a grammar school had one purpose only, and that was proclaimed in its name – to teach grammar, Latin grammar. No history, geography, music, handicrafts, physical training, biology, chemistry, physics; only Latin grammar” (29). This concentration on the art and craft of grammar and rhetoric, according to Elizabethan pedagogy, was intended to “turn boys into gentlemen,” with the hope that “the eloquence and wisdom garnered at school would directly benefit the English commonwealth” (Enterline 9).

Though Shakespeare had “small Latine, and lesse Greeke” (9) in comparison to his contemporaries according to his rival and admirer Ben Jonson, he still mastered the art of rhetoric as a youngster, and if the legend of him becoming a grammar-school teacher in the English countryside before moving to London to become a dramatist is

accurate, then he likely spent his earliest days as an adult teaching the same rhetorical lessons he learned to the next generation of middle-class boys in England.

According to Brian Vickers, the intense focus on rhetoric in English grammar schools resulted in every young man of the period knowing “by heart” and “familiarily” (qtd. in McDonald, *Arts* 37) over a hundred rhetorical figures, paralipsis being one of them. In fact, paralipsis was one of Shakespeare’s most often invoked rhetorical devices. In *The Development of Shakespeare’s Rhetoric: A Study of Nine Plays* (2004) by Stefan Daniel Keller, Shakespeare’s use of forty-three rhetorical devices is traced through a sampling of nine of his most famous plays spanning his career from *Titus Andronicus* to *The Tempest*. Ninety-seven examples of paralipsis are identified by Keller in just those nine plays, which break down to 3.6 instances per thousand lines (69). He demonstrates how Shakespeare relies heavily on paralipsis in *Richard III* (95-9), how it is “unusually frequent” in *King Lear* (195), and used most in *The Winter’s Tale* (225). Others, like Sister Miriam Joseph, focused on Shakespeare’s use of paralipsis in plays such as *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, and *Othello*.<sup>4</sup>

However, there is hardly a treatise on Shakespeare and rhetoric that does not point to Mark Antony’s manipulation of the plebeians in *Julius Caesar* (3.2) as the most effective illustration of paralipsis in Shakespeare’s canon. Vowing that he has come to merely bury Caesar and not speak of all of his good deeds, Antony nevertheless continues to “mention without mentioning” all the good that Caesar did for the people of Rome, even at one point producing a copy of Caesar’s will, which, according to Antony, is filled with all the riches that Caesar has left behind for the good of the Roman people. Upon flashing it in front of the crowd, he intentionally delays the reading of the will, for he

“must not read it. / It is not meet you know how Caesar loved you: / You are not wood, you are not stones, but men, / And, being men, hearing the will of Caesar, / It will inflame you, it will make you mad. / ‘Tis good you know not that you are his heirs, / For if you should, O, what would come of it?” (3.2.141-46). By simply uttering how he will not speak of Caesar’s noble attributes, and by waving Caesar’s will in front of the mass of Roman spectators without allowing anyone to read it, Antony is manipulating the crowd into remembering all the good that Caesar has done for them, and he is encouraging them to infer what Caesar may have left to them upon his death. Now, no matter what Antony says for the remainder of his speech, the gathered masses will be pondering Caesar’s will and remembering his virtues. He is using these voids artfully and to his advantage, to “inflame” them and make them “mad.”

There is no question Shakespeare was deft at exhibiting paralipsis in the words and actions of his characters, and it is likely he became familiar with the rhetorical device not only from his grammar-school education, but also from two grammar books from the late 1580s that many scholars assume he consulted as a budding poet and playwright: George Puttenham’s *The Arte of English Poesie* (1585) and Angel Day’s *The English Secreterie* (1586). Puttenham defined paralipsis as “to make wise as if we set but light of the matter, and that therefore we do pass it over slightly, when indeed we do then intend most effectually – and despitefully, if it be invective – to remember it” (317), and Day writes, “When in seeming to overpass, omit, or let slip a thing, we then chiefly speak thereof” (95). The examples above of Shakespeare’s use of paralipsis illustrate these definitions precisely. Furthermore, as Andrew Fitzmaurice observes in *Shakespeare and Early Modern Political Thought* (2009), Shakespeare would incorporate the rhetorical

scheme not merely as linguistic ornamentation but would “employ paralipsis in order to draw attention to a problem.... The use of this figure suggested not a void... but an abundance of thought on a matter” (151).

Here we start to see how paralipsis begins to go beyond strict rhetoric into a more symbolic, more “abundant” (to use Fitzmaurice’s term) realm. Shakespeare’s mastery of rhetoric is striking in his earliest works such as *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, *Venus and Adonis*, and *Lucrece* as each seems to be an exhibition in rhetoric, full of textbook figures and tropes that hearken back to the masters of Greek and Roman literature and oratory. In fact, as Russ McDonald observes, the systematized forms of rhetoric inculcated in Elizabethan classrooms and grammar handbooks were so familiar to the educated members of Shakespeare’s audience that, early in his career, it was easy for him to get quick laughs from his patrons simply by referring to a rhetorical device (*Bedford* 43-4). One need look no further than *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the *Henry VI* plays, or *Richard III* for examples of Shakespeare’s overt reliance on extravagant and naked rhetoric in his drama.

What separated Shakespeare from his contemporaries, who all exhibited long strands of ornamental rhetoric in their plays, was the fact that Shakespeare would often experiment with rhetoric in its literal sense and move it in a more symbolic, more metaphorical direction, and the more mature he became as a playwright, the more bold he got in his rhetorical creativity. For example, Shakespeare had a tendency to use rhetorical devices ironically, often in ways that parodied pedantic speakers, belied villainous characters, or denoted precocious ones. Indeed, Shakespeare exhibits his most dazzling rhetoric in the language of his most corrupt villains, aloof pedants, and foolish clowns –

not in the language of his great heroes. The rhetoric in Shakespeare's plays takes on a tone of contradiction and dramatic irony on the page and on the stage, which his audience is intended to identify.

As we witnessed in Shakespeare's refusal to conform to neoclassical expectations of character in the prior chapter, Shakespeare similarly pressed the boundaries of rhetoric and toyed with convention. Midway through his career, Shakespeare's use of rhetoric underwent a dramatic metamorphosis, and though he stopped using rhetoric as overtly and abundantly as he had in his earlier plays, he was not rejecting rhetoric entirely; on the contrary, his movement away from the classical tropes and forms provided, as McDonald observes, "further evidence of an expanded and more subtle view of the art" (*Arts* 45). In McDonald's estimation, this change suggests that Shakespeare learned that "the most effective form of rhetoric is that which conceals itself" (*Arts* 46). McDonald explains that Shakespeare, early in his career, "indulges in much verbal display and rhetorical patterning, taking pleasure in the sound and arrangement of words for their own sake; as he gains experience and maturity, we can observe the apparent diminution of such schemes and patterns." He continues:

What must be emphasized, however, is that his dependence on rhetoric never disappears. In one of the mature masterpieces... the poetic surfaces may seem less formal and artificial than in an earlier text... but the differences are less substantial than they look. What actually happens... is that Shakespeare turns his attention from one kind of rhetorical device to another, discarding the more obvious formulae in favor of more subtle manipulations.... The poet internalizes the principles that underlie the obvious figures. In other words, although the verbal manifestations of rhetoric may be less insistent, the principles that animate those forms, ideas such as antithesis or parallelism or irony, are still very much in force. (*Arts* 37-8)

It is this internalization, this use of the principles and ideas *behind* rhetorical devices to animate his work, this manipulation of rhetorical formulae, as McDonald puts it, that allowed Shakespeare to manifest rhetorical effects on stage and transpose them from a purely linguistic plane to a dramatic one. Lynn Enterline observes this phenomenon as well, and in her book *Shakespeare's Schoolroom* (2012), she dubs this repurposing of rhetorical principles the “metarhetorical” (10).<sup>5</sup> She demonstrates how the principles behind rhetoric seep beyond the dialogue of the text to inform the action, staging, and performance of a play. By internalizing the rhetorical devices, the best Renaissance actors “modulated their performances... [with] bodily deportment, facial movement, vocal modulation, and affective expression” (44).

“Early modern schoolboys internalized (indeed, embodied) grammar school training,” she reminds us. “From early grammar lessons to advanced training in oratory, [it becomes] impossible to separate language lessons from embodiment” (22). Using this as her thesis, Enterline examines how deeply character and emotion – both in the Elizabethan playwright and the roles he created for his actors – were impacted by a grammar-school upbringing. To her, Shakespeare’s embodiment of rhetorical principles as a child is visible in the way he crafts his characters, particularly in how he uses characters to embody and exhibit “metarhetorical” effects. In Enterline’s opinion, this makes tangible “what we now recognize and describe as characteristically Shakespearean” (122).

In *Shakespeare & The Drama of his Time* (2000), Martin Wiggins observes this phenomenon, too. “What rhetoricians did with words and sentences, playwrights did with characters and scenes.” He goes on to point out that dramatists would “apply the

mechanisms of rhetoric explicitly to plotting and structure.” Wiggins gives examples from Lyly, Marlowe, and, of course, Shakespeare, that demonstrate how their plots and themes are often “ordered by principles of parallelism and symmetry.” Their characters would often appear “in contrasting pairs or in numerically equivalent groups,” and their plot devices would “balance each other – sleeping and waking, disguising and undisguising, enchantment and disenchantment – in order to open and close narrative possibilities” (83). These dramatists toyed with the concept behind paradox in “comedy’s orderly disorder” and in their numerous gender-bending plots that involved boy actors playing female characters disguising themselves as male characters, and while comedy dealt with balance, Wiggins notes that tragedy relied on “significant repetition of events” and “antithesis.” To Wiggins, “these examples illustrate that a play’s themes were as much a [result] of its structural make-up as was its story: the ‘rhetorical’ patterning of the action contributes not only to the play’s narrative exposition but also to the audience’s apprehension of its conceptual argument” (84).

So if Shakespeare, a product of Elizabethan grammar schools and a master rhetorician, allowed the principles behind rhetorical devices like parallelism, paradox, repetition, and antithesis to shape his characters, plots, themes, and structures, it is not a stretch to assume he did the same with paralipsis, one of his most oft-used tropes. With this in mind, we can begin to see examples of how Shakespeare would use paralipsis meta-rhetorically, particularly in how he manages those characters who are established as promising but never seem (on the surface) to live up to their potential.

As long as critics have been analyzing Shakespeare’s characters, there have been four who have often perplexed scholars for their unexpected disappearances. At the end



of 2 *Henry IV*, Shakespeare promises to follow the antics of the larger-than-life Sir John Falstaff in the sequel, *Henry V*, yet the character never walks upon the stage. In *Julius Caesar*, Cicero is introduced as a key figure caught in the center of Caesar's troubling rise to power and the conspirators' plot to assassinate him, but he disappears after only speaking a few lines in the first act of the play. Fortinbras, the Norwegian prince who has vowed vengeance upon Hamlet's family and is established in the opening lines of *Hamlet* as the specter of death marching toward Elsinore, remains on the periphery of the play for its entirety. And Lear's Fool, the king's most faithful ally in exile, is inseparable from his master in the first three acts of *King Lear*; however, without explanation, he vanishes mid-way through the play.

For the last four centuries, Cicero and Fortinbras have received little attention from critics due to their small parts – each speaks less than six times in their plays – and though Falstaff and Lear's Fool have received their share of analyses, the assessments of their significance rarely extend beyond their inexplicable absences. However, these characters, and more importantly the voids they leave behind, deserve more scrutiny. Shakespeare establishes each of them to be important in their respective plays – foils, even, for the main characters of their dramas – and ripe for character analysis, yet none of them seem to live up to their potential and appear to be left disappointingly underdeveloped. As such, their absences have often been ascribed to Shakespeare's assumed "sloppiness" as a playwright or the speculated limitations of his acting troupe, and these parts are regularly excluded from critical discussion and rarely afforded any artistic significance. But what if the abandonment of these neglected characters is purposeful on Shakespeare's part rather than mere examples of his capriciousness or

theatrical economy, and what if these characters play a more important, more symbolic role being jettisoned than if they were fully realized?

Like Antony waving Caesar's will before the plebeians, Shakespeare uses these characters paraliptically, flashing them before his audience and then conspicuously setting them to the side, leaving his audience to wonder why. However, in absence, these characters become most present; when discarded to the periphery, they become central; and in their silences, they speak volumes. Examined through a paraliptic lens, these four neglected roles and the narrative gaps they leave in their wakes suddenly take on a deeper, more symbolic significance, and the themes of their respective plays are now underscored in ways that demonstrate Shakespeare's art and his willingness to experiment with rhetoric and character that remind us of his genius, both in his day and for all time. As with the jazz notes that aren't played, *these* are the characters to whom we should pay close attention.

### Chapter III

#### *Henry the Fifth: Plump Jack Banished*

Critics have long wrestled with the absence of Falstaff in *Henry V*; however, over the last four hundred years, there is still no satisfying consensus for the seemingly inexplicable disappearance of the famous bed-presser and horseback-breaker, Sir John Paunch. Theories have ranged widely over the centuries, from Arthur Quiller-Couch's observation that Shakespeare may have discarded the immoral Falstaff in an attempt to dissociate himself from his most notorious figure as the playwright was "preparing to leave London, buying property in Stratford, applying for a coat-of-arms, and generally (as they say) turning respectable" (121), to J. Dover Wilson's suggestion that Falstaff appeared in Shakespeare's original draft of *Henry V* but was later cut and his lines reassigned to Pistol, thus "enlarging the serious as well as curtailing the comic" ("Introduction," *Henry V* 115) in the somewhat humorless, patriotically-bent play. Some critics have even theorized that Shakespeare was pressured to jettison the comical scoundrel in the final installment of the *Henriad* by the irked descendants of Sir John Oldcastle and Sir John Fastolf, Falstaff's historical namesakes; however, if we are to believe most Shakespearean chronologies, this theory is unlikely since an even more buffoonish Falstaff returns as the protagonist of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* a year or so later.<sup>6</sup>

There are two notions for Falstaff's disappearance that have reached varying levels of acceptance over the last several hundred years, though. One, which held sway

for centuries, has to do with Shakespeare's creative limitations as a playwright, and the other, which seems to be inching closer to canon in the twenty-first century, has to do with the limitations of his acting troupe. These two prevailing theories are rather dismissive of Shakespeare's art and do not allow for symbolic interpretation of the missing knight, let alone a paraliptic reading of the omitted part; however, these antiseptic theories have endured.

The first theory for Fat Jack's disappearance, which was propagated by a number of leading critics from the mid-1700s to the mid-1900s, suggested that Shakespeare may have simply reached a point of creative exhaustion writing as vibrant and witty a character as Falstaff, and though he closed *2 Henry IV* promising that *Henry V* would continue "with Sir John in it" (Epilogue 28), his inability to continue to craft such a "sweet creature of bombast" (*1 Henry IV* 2.4.326-7) led to his excision of Fat Jack from the subsequent play. In his *Prefaces to Shakespeare* (1765), Samuel Johnson was the first to propose that Shakespeare:

could contrive no train of adventures suitable to [Falstaff], or could match him with no companions likely to quicken his humour, or could open no new vein of pleasantry, and was afraid to continue the same strain lest it should not find the same reception, he has here for ever discarded him, and made haste to dispatch him, perhaps... that no other hand might attempt to exhibit him.

Let meaner authors learn from this example, that it is dangerous to sell the bear which is yet not hunted, to promise to the public what they have not written. (81)

A.C. Bradley agreed in his "The Rejection of Falstaff" (1909). Just as Dryden claimed that Shakespeare admitted to killing the verbally deft Mercutio in the third act of *Romeo and Juliet* "to prevent being killed by him" (Wells, *A Life* 11), Bradley suggests,

“in the creation of Falstaff [Shakespeare] overreached himself. He was caught up on the wind of his own genius, and carried so far that he could not descend to earth” (273).

These theories of an exhausted, imaginatively-tapped Shakespeare are rather unsatisfying, particularly from critics such as Johnson and Bradley who often reveled in Shakespeare’s artful ambiguities; yet this hypothesis predominated for most of the last four hundred years. The notion of an uninspired Shakespeare has been somewhat usurped in the last fifty years, though, and supplanted by a new explanation for Fat Jack’s disappearance, yet this more recent theory also disregards Shakespeare’s genius and also allows no room for artistic interpretation of the character’s absence. Modern Shakespeare biographers from Anthony Burgess to Lois Potter have mostly perpetuated – if not solidified – the economical rationale that William Kemp’s departure from the Lord Chamberlain’s Men resulted in Falstaff’s disappearance from *Henry V* since Kemp was Shakespeare’s resident clown and the likely player to have portrayed Sir John.

James Shapiro, for example, took issue with Johnson’s theory that the exemption of Falstaff was the result of Shakespeare’s expired genius. He called Johnson’s explanation “desperate” and, like many contemporary critics and biographers, Shapiro suggested that the missing Falstaff “had nothing to do with character or plot but rather with Kemp and clowning. The parting of ways between Shakespeare and Kemp... was a rejection not only of a certain kind of comedy but also a declaration that from here on, it was going to be a playwright’s and not an actor’s theater” (1599 37). Peter Ackroyd in *Shakespeare: The Biography* (2005) took a similar approach to Falstaff’s absence in *Henry V*: “Will Kemp had left the company. Without the star comic player, there was no point in bringing back Falstaff. There was no one to play him” (223). This is why,

according to R. Scott Fraser in “The King Hath Killed His Heart” (2009), “the death is understandably reported as early as possible [in *Henry V*]... otherwise an audience would spend too much time waiting for Kemp / Falstaff to arrive” (153). Simply put, as David Wiles explained in mathematical terms in *Shakespeare’s Clown* (1987), “Kemp = Falstaff” (120). No Kemp, no Falstaff in *Henry V*.

Though this economical explanation for Falstaff’s disappearance has been gaining momentum since H.D. Gray and J. Dover Wilson began expounding the Kemp theory in the first half of the twentieth century, not all authorities agree with Shapiro, Ackroyd, and Wiles advancing this speculation. Jonathan Bate, for example, suggested that Falstaff could have just as likely been written for and played by Thomas Pope rather than Will Kemp (347), whereas Edmond Malone believed the part was played by Heminges, “the original performer of Falstaff” according to his research. Malone’s lifetime devotion to studying Shakespeare led him to the conclusion that Kemp portrayed Justice Shallow instead (qtd. in Wilson, *Fortunes* 142). And, in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry for Will Kemp, Martin Butler added his voice to the debate, saying that attributing the role of Falstaff to Kemp is “difficult.” Citing Dogberry and Bottom, clear Kemp roles, as counterpoints for the role of Falstaff, Butler says:

[Falstaff] has self-evident clown features, such as direct audience address and farcical misadventures, but his role is much more developed than Kemp’s usual parts, and his age, size, and gentility do not match Kemp’s athleticism and plainness. It is significant that John Lowin, the Falstaff of the next generation, was not a clown but a tragedian. All of Kemp’s other attested roles are unpretentious men who plough a fine line between vulgar ignorance and demotic cunning... [and] often intellectually at sea in the complex affairs into which they stray. (*n. pag.*)

If there is one thing that all scholars can agree upon when it comes to Falstaff, it is that he is not “intellectually at sea” in the complex affairs of *1* and *2 Henry IV*; on the contrary, he is a master manipulator.

With these dissenting opinions in mind, perhaps Kemp ≠ Falstaff? Additionally, the idea that Shakespeare would discard Falstaff due to Kemp’s departure in 1599 is incongruent with the fact that his company retained *1* and *2 Henry IV* in repertory into the 1600s and was on the brink of resurrecting Fat Jack in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Shakespeare and his men were versatile professionals able to adapt to the needs of the company, so the suggestion that Kemp was the only player capable of donning Falstaff’s giant hose remains doubtful, especially since one would have had to do exactly that for the private court performance of *1 Henry IV* for the visiting Flemish Ambassador in 1600, which occurred shortly after Kemp’s departure from the Lord Chamberlain’s Men (Empson 30).

These two prevailing theories for Falstaff’s disappearance in *Henry V*, the “uninspired theory” and the “Kemp theory,” seem out of joint for a playwright as masterly and nimble as Shakespeare. Perhaps, then, there *is* an artful purpose to Falstaff’s omission, in spite of Shapiro’s assertion that it “had nothing to do with character or plot.” William Empson always thought as much: he railed against those who would “‘play down’ the death of Falstaff, because it was once for all ‘written up’” (36). J.I.M. Stewart agreed. To him, Falstaff’s disappearance “is much less like an expedient dictated by changes in personnel in [Shakespeare’s] company than the issue of his reflections on the inner significance of what had happened at the close of the earlier drama [*2 Henry IV*]” (136).

So what did Shakespeare reflect on that could have made him decide to break his vow of Falstaff's return and instead produce a play in which Falstaff never walks upon the stage? Stephen Greenblatt imagines this moment in Shakespeare's career in *Will in the World* (2004):

Yet when he actually sat down to continue the story, by writing a play about Henry V's great triumph over the French at Agincourt, Shakespeare had second thoughts. Falstaff's cynical, antiheroic stance – his ruthless, comic deflation of the idealizing claims of those in power and his steadfast insistence on the primacy of the flesh – proved impossible to incorporate into a celebration of charismatic leadership and martial heroism. That celebration was not without Shakespeare's characteristic skeptical intelligence, but for the play to succeed – for Hal to be something more than a mock king – skepticism had to stop short of the relentless mockery that in two consecutive plays Falstaff so brilliantly articulated. Hence Shakespeare decided to break his promise to the audience and to keep his comic masterpiece out of *Henry V*. Indeed, he decided to get rid of him permanently by providing a detailed narrative of death.... (223)

These explanations by Empson, Stewart, and Greenblatt seem more satisfying and unifying than the idea that Shakespeare rid himself of Falstaff merely because he had grown tired of the witty knight or had no other option with the departure of Will Kemp: these theories allow room for artistic interpretation, and they grant the character of Falstaff a more worthy ending, an ending that neither Shakespeare nor his audience would have wanted compromised. However, Greenblatt and other scholars who try to find an artistic meaning in Falstaff's excision from *Henry V* often write of an obliterated Falstaff, one who, to use Greenblatt's terms, is "kept out" and "gotten rid of," yet Falstaff is very much present in *Henry V*. Granted, his character is dead and never appears in the play, but his spirit endures and manifests at the most poignant of times, just when Shakespeare seems to want to draw attention to a thematic element of the play. This is



where a paralytic reading of Falstaff – and Shakespeare’s use of such a gambit – can shed new light on Falstaff’s disappearance in *Henry V*.

If Shakespeare’s elimination of Falstaff is intended to make audiences forget about the fat knight and solely focus on Hal’s conquests in France, it is unlikely that the playwright would continue to invoke Sir John throughout *Henry V*. Falstaff – even a dead Falstaff – is too valuable to Shakespeare and to Hal’s arc to be jettisoned entirely. Of all of Shakespeare’s characters, none has been as enduringly popular as Sir John Falstaff, and the anticipation of his promised arrival and accompanying antics in *Henry V* is likely what brought a significant number of playgoers to the Globe for Shakespeare’s final play on the Wars of the Roses. He is not a character that Shakespeare would have discarded lightly.

“Fat Jack” captivated audiences and readers from the moment he first walked upon London stages in the late 1590s. Regardless of their titles, *1* and *2 Henry IV* were – and still are – *Falstaff’s* plays. In the two parts of *Henry IV*, Falstaff speaks more lines than any other character, including the protagonist, Hal, and the titular character, King Henry IV, and whenever Falstaff is present, he eclipses every other character on stage: his wit and humor outshine them all. This is why Harold Bloom refers to the tetralogy as *The Falstaffiad*, not *The Henriad*, even though Falstaff only appears in two of the four plays (*Invention* 294).

A play featuring Falstaff was a guaranteed success for theaters and bookstalls alike. Leonard Digges, a contemporary poet of Shakespeare’s, noted that if a company were to put on one of Falstaff’s plays, “you scarce have a roome” in the theater, and according to seventeenth-century commentator Sir Thomas Palmer, Falstaff’s language

and antics were so absorbing that, “from cracking Nuts [Falstaff] hath kept the throng” (qtd. in Kastan 105). Falstaff was so captivating and beloved – both on stage and on the page – that it is no surprise *1 Henry IV* was the most reprinted of any of Shakespeare’s plays, having been released in eleven editions in less than fifty years from when it was first published: nine times in quarto form and twice in folios (*Shakespeare Quartos n. pag.*).

Falstaff was so ingrained in Elizabethan and Jacobean society that one in ten references to Shakespeare in the 1600s is a reference to Falstaff, and he was mentioned so often and so widely in public and private letters, documents, and criticism of the seventeenth century that his figure dwarfs all other allusions to Shakespeare’s poems, characters, and plays, including his most popular work of the day, *Venus and Adonis* (Ingleby 372). Falstaff did much to solidify Shakespeare’s reputation as a leading playwright in his time, and the originality and genius of Falstaff is credited with helping Shakespeare eclipse Ben Jonson as England’s greatest playwright in the centuries following their deaths.<sup>7</sup>

With Falstaff’s tremendous popularity, it is no wonder that he was Shakespeare’s only character, according to legend, to have been so adored by Queen Elizabeth that she requested a special play be written about him falling in love, thus resulting in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Barton, “Introduction” 320). And, Falstaff had become such a part of the collective cultural unconscious that his name even manifested in clerical errors of the age. Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels under James I, so closely associated the fat knight with the *Henriad* that he mistakenly recorded a 1625 court performance of *1 Henry IV* as *The First Part of Sir John Falstaff* (Kastan 105), just as Andrew Wyse and

William Aspley could not help but affix Falstaff's name to *Henry IV* when they entered the play into the Stationer's Register on August 23, 1600: "Henry the iiiij<sup>th</sup> with the humours of Sir John Fallstaff: Wrytten by master Shakespere" (Ingleby xxviii).

Since Falstaff's fame equated to box-office returns, it is no surprise at the end of 2 *Henry IV* that Shakespeare would include an epilogue foreshadowing his return in *Henry V*. After Falstaff is denied by the newly crowned King Hal and dragged to prison at the end of 2 *Henry IV*, Shakespeare closes the play with an epilogue that states: "One word more, I beseech you. If you be not too much cloy'd with fat meat, our humble author will continue the story, with Sir John in it... where (for anything I know) Falstaff shall die of a sweat" (Epilogue 26-30). Shakespeare did not often include epilogues at the ends of his plays, but with Fat Jack being hauled off to the Fleet prison at the conclusion of 2 *Henry IV*, he must have felt it necessary to reassure his audience that Fat Jack would run rampant again. At the same time, by promoting the return of Falstaff, Shakespeare was also ensuring a sold-out theater for the debut of *Henry V*.

By the time The Lord Chamberlain's Men first performed *King Henry V* in 1599, audiences were well prepared for what they were about to see. *Henry V* begins with a number of allusions to Falstaff, which starts to lay the foundation for his paralytic function in the play. Opening on two holy men, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely, the first scene of *Henry V* revolves around the bishops marveling at Hal's transformation from a rambunctious prince to a noble and virtuous king. The essence of Falstaff permeates the scene as Canterbury admires Hal's ability to "debate of commonwealth affairs" (41), "discourse of war" (43), "unloose" the "Gordian knot" of

policy (45-6), and speak in “sweet and honeyed sentences” (50). How, they wonder, could Hal have learned such skills?

Since his addiction was to courses vain,  
His companies unlettered, rude and shallow,  
His hours filled up with riots, banquets, sports,  
And never noted in him any study,  
Any retirement, any sequestration  
From open haunts and popularity.  
(54-9)

After having witnessed Hal’s journey from prince to king in the two parts of *Henry IV*, Shakespeare’s audience knows what these churchmen do not: Hal gleaned these skills from Falstaff. While the bishops may not know of Falstaff’s ability to debate and weave tales of war and speak in “honeyed sentences,” we do. How many Gordian knots have we witnessed Falstaff, the “oily rascal... known as well as Paul’s” (*1 Henry IV* 2.4.526) unmake in the prior two plays? This dramatic irony seems to reaffirm Shakespeare’s promise of Falstaff’s return in this play, and it lays the foundation for his paraliptic effect by evoking memories of the fat knight multiple times, though it certainly does not suggest an obliterated Falstaff like some critics might suggest.

Knowingly or not, the two men continue to refer to Falstaff’s mentorship of Hal when Ely observes that Hal “grew like the summer grass fastest by the night” (65), which Canterbury suggests is miraculous. Yet, again, we know that Hal grew fastest by the knight of the night, John Falstaff, Diana’s forester, gentleman of shade, and minion of the moon (*1 Henry IV* 1.2.25-6), who is consistently associated with night imagery throughout *1* and *2 Henry IV*. With Falstaff’s spirit already being conjured in the opening scene of the play, audiences must have expected to see him in the flesh soon enough. In

fact, by this point in the *Henriad*, audiences had been conditioned to Falstaff arriving on stage in Act 1, scene 2, which is when he appeared in the prior two plays.

Shakespeare created a dramatic structure in *1* and *2 Henry IV* that established the atmosphere of the dramas by opening each with a serious scene depicting political unrest, civil war, and bloodshed. After the broad implications for King and country were set, and once the implicit looming tone of the plays were realized in their respective first scenes, Shakespeare would make a point to subvert the serious with the ridiculous by shifting to scenes focused on the antics of Sir John and his band of scoundrels in Eastcheap. In *1 Henry IV*, for example, the play opens on a tense scene revolving around the attacks from Wales and Scotland and the seeming revolt of the Percy family; the second scene begins with the humors of Falstaff. With the stage direction “Enter PRINCE OF WALES and SIR JOHN FALSTAFF,” Falstaff walks upon the stage and, in a haze, utters the first words of the scene: “Now Hal, what time of day is it, lad?” (1.2.1). Similarly, in *2 Henry IV*, the second scene of the play again follows a serious one by introducing Falstaff who once more utters the first lines, this time: “Sirrah, you giant, what says the doctor to my water?” (1.2.1). Nothing breaks the tension of political unrest like a drunken man wondering at the time of day or a soused debauchee questioning the quality of his urine.

However, Falstaff is conspicuously absent in the second scene of *Henry V*, though nearly every other character appears. In 1.2, a crowded stage is populated by King Henry, the Duke of Gloucester, Bedford, Clarence, Westmerland, Exeter, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Ely, and various attendants, all discussing the justification for declaring war on France. A disruption of the dramatic structure set in the prior two plays may have made some attentive and expectant audience members start to wonder at

Falstaff's nonappearance, but it would not be long before all playgoers would become aware of his absence. This becomes strikingly clear when the Archbishop of Canterbury, in rather "Gordian" terms, manipulates King Henry into focusing his attention on invading France while distracting him from enforcing a law that would result in the church losing half of its property. In the prior scene, Ely wonders of the law, "But how, my lord, shall we resist it now?" (1.1.6) and "[W]hat prevention?" (1.1.21). Indulging Hal's vanity and thirst for power, Canterbury is able to convince the young king to set his sights on seizing France rather than half of the Church's possessions, which "'Twould drink the cup and all" (1.1.22). Regardless of our opinion of Hal, sinner or saint, we are not used to seeing him so influenced, and some audience members must have wished Sir John were there to intervene, if not to protect Hal to at least expose Canterbury's deception.

By the time act 2 begins, audiences are finally transported back to The Boar's Head Tavern, and we have been told by the Chorus that "The King is set from London" (34), leading us to wonder how we will see Falstaff, whom Shakespeare has promised us. Will he be by Henry's side in France, or will he be claiming London for himself in Hal's absence? Is he still in the Fleet prison? One thing is for sure: he is not at the Boar's Head, for it is in chaos. Once more, Falstaff's absence is felt. Normally, he is presiding over the actions of his merry men by breaking up squabbles, keeping Pistol in line, and maintaining an atmosphere of light-hearted cheer. However, the scene opens in tumult with Nym and Pistol arguing over the love of Nell Quickly and Bardolph failing to keep the peace.

Swords are drawn, insults are hurled, tensions reach a fevered pitch. The only thing that prevents bloodshed is Falstaff's Boy, who enters the scene urging them to come quickly to Falstaff's bedside. Fat Jack is sick and on the verge of death. The somber message cools their tempers, and they take a moment to reflect on Falstaff's state. "The King has kill'd his heart" (2.1.88), professes the Hostess. Nym agrees that "The King hath run bad humors on the knight, that's the even of it" (2.1.121-2). Pistol also agrees, saying, "Nym, thou hast spoke the right. His heart is fractured and corroborate" (2.1.123-4).

Not only is Falstaff's ill health a grave thought for his companions, but the news must have been equally jarring to the audience, which has been anticipating his arrival in this heretofore humorless play. At this point, playgoers are noticing the lack of merriment with the absence of Sir John. If he is dying, one wonders what the consequences will be on the remainder of the play and, more specifically, King Henry's future.

Hal and Falstaff have always been linked opposites. Immediately upon their joint introduction in 1.2 of *1 Henry IV*, they are contrasted and established as foils for one another. One is a healthy, young prince with an air of superiority; the other is a fat, old knight who indulgently accepts his appetites for sack and bawds. Hal is associated with the Greek god Phoebus and the illuminating light of the sun, Falstaff with the Roman goddess Diana and the shade of the moon. Regardless of their differences, though, they are introduced as equals sparring with witty jokes about one another. Throughout the first two acts of the play, they volley stinging barbs back and forth like the Dauphin's tennis balls with no insult being out of bounds. "This sanguine coward, this bed-presser, this horse-back-breaker, this huge hill of flesh –" (2.4.241-3), yells Harry. Falstaff returns, "you starveling, you [eel-] skin, you dried neat's tongue, you bull's pizzle, you stock-

fish,... you tailor's yard, you sheath, you bowcase, you vile standing tuck –" (2.4.244-8).

Their balanced repartee, perhaps inspired by the principles of the rhetorical device parallelism as observed by Wiggins earlier, denotes a symbiotic relationship, one that does not differentiate between a prince and a scoundrel, and which is which. Once their equivalency has been established in the first half of the play, though, Shakespeare starts them on opposing journeys away from one another toward polar ends of a spectrum.

By the midway point of *1 Henry IV*, Hal begins colluding more with Poins instead of Falstaff, and suddenly the balance that Shakespeare has established between the two seems slightly off. Then, by 3.1, Hal is spending more time in the company of his father and the court, while Falstaff presides over the Boar's Head Tavern in Eastcheap. Falstaff feeds off of Hal's youth and vitality, and now separated by the span of the city, Falstaff appears to fade and weaken. Distanced from Hal for the first time in the play, Falstaff asks Bardolph, "Am I not fallen away vilely since this last action? Do I not bate? Do I not dwindle? Why, my skin hangs about me like an old lady's loose gown. I am withered like an old apple-john" (3.3.1-4). Perhaps he is joking, but we cannot dismiss the imagery at this point. Notice, too, that this occurs after Hal grows stronger with more virility and vitality. In the presence of his father, he vows, "I will wear a garment all of blood," – not an old lady's loose gown – "And stain my favours in a bloody mask, / Which, washed away, shall scour my shame with it." (3.2.135-7). Transforming into a warrior rivaling Hotspur, he continues, "I will tear the reckoning from [Hotspur's] heart. / This in the name of God I promise here" (3.2.152-3).

A new structure in the relationship between Hal and Falstaff now becomes apparent in the middle of *1 Henry IV*. As Henry progresses, Falstaff regresses. As Hal



risers, Falstaff falls. As Henry and Falstaff are distanced from one another, their symbiotic relationship becomes a polar relationship, and for audience members with any foresight, they can begin to see how this relationship is likely to end in a later installment of the *Henriad*. Shakespeare hints at the future of Hal and Falstaff at the close of *1 Henry IV*. King Henry declares that they have won the battle against the Percys, but the war with the rebels is not over. He decrees:

You, son John, and my cousin Westmerland  
Towards York shall bend you with your dearest speed,  
To meet Northumberland and the prelate Scroop,  
Who, as we hear, are busily in arms.  
Myself and you, son Harry, will towards Wales,  
To fight with Glendower and the Earl of March”  
(5.4.35-40).

We learn that Falstaff will be joining Prince John in York rather than Harry in Wales, so Shakespeare plans to continue their separation in *2 Henry IV*, not only geographically but figuratively as they both continue on their opposing trajectories – one towards life as a King and one towards death as a pauper. We have already seen how Falstaff withers when distanced from Hal in the capital; one can only imagine how he will suffer in another part of the country in the subsequent play. Conversely, we have also seen how a power-hungry Harry envisions himself as a domineering and ambitious killer when Falstaff is not around to undermine him with his antics. How will this bode for Harry’s development in *2 Henry IV*?

Interestingly, in all of *2 Henry IV*, Hal and Falstaff, inseparable for the majority of *1 Henry IV*, only share two scenes, one of course being the final scene, in which a newly-crowned and unjustifiably pious Hal rejects Falstaff and severs their relationship entirely. Left to his own devices without a Falstaff to call him a dried bull’s penis and deflate his

ego, Hal's greed and selfishness grow. Again conversely, Falstaff, continues to dwindle and rot separated from the vibrant young prince. Having recently consulted a doctor, Falstaff, we learn, is riddled with disease, suffering from a "pox," a "halt," and "gout" (1.2.243-5). Later, the Hostess observes that Falstaff seems "rheumatic" (2.4.57), and he shudders at the thought of his death when Doll suggests he "patch up [his] old body for heaven" (2.4.233). Falstaff: "Peace, good Doll, do not speak like a death's-head, do not bid me remember mine end" (2.4.234-5). Ironically, Falstaff utters these lines about his demise at the moment Hal enters the scene – the first time the two men share the stage in *2 Henry IV*. Also, one could argue that Falstaff is an analog for England. With this in mind, it seems more than coincidence that the country's "body" is "foul" and overgrown with "rank disease" and "danger near the heart of it" (3.1.38-40), especially now that the unabashed Hal is rising to power.

Throughout these first two plays of the *Henriad*, the orchestrated separation of Hal and Falstaff becomes increasingly clearer, and there must be an artistic explanation for it. Falstaff's antics in the forest of Gaultree with Hal's brother, Prince John, in *2 Henry IV* could have as easily been with Hal, just as all of Hal's jesting with Poins in his apartment in *2 Henry IV* would have felt more natural with Falstaff. The disconnect between the two appears deliberate, and without Fat Jack to balance him, Hal becomes more greedy, tyrannical, and selfish. While Falstaff's corruption is bodily, Hal's is spiritual. What better scene to demonstrate an unchecked Prince Hal's thirst for power than 4.2 in *2 Henry IV*? With Falstaff away fighting King Henry's war, Hal returns from a leisurely hunt at Windsor to find his father on his deathbed. Though Hal vows to grieve for his father, he is instead mesmerized by the glittering crown on the King's prone body,

and he places it atop his head. Waking, and noticing his missing crown, King Henry IV weeps, “See, sons, what things you are, / How quickly Nature falls into revolt / When gold becomes her object!” (4.5.64-6). Confronting Hal with his final breaths, the king says, “O foolish youth, / Thou seek’st the greatness that will overwhelm thee” (4.5.96-7). He continues:

Harry the Fift is crown’d! Up, vanity!  
Down, royal state! All you sage counselors, hence!  
And to the English court assemble now,  
From every region, apes of idleness!  
.  
.  
.  
For the fift Harry from curb’d license plucks  
The muzzle of restraint, and the wild dog  
Shall flesh his tooth on every innocent.  
O my poor kingdom, sick with civil blows!  
(4.5.119-33)

Earlier in the scene, King Henry IV fears for an unfettered Hal without a voice of conscience to keep his ambition in check:

The blood weeps from my heart when I do shape,  
In forms imaginary, th’ unguided days  
And rotten times that you shall look upon,  
When I am sleeping with my ancestors.  
For when [Hal’s] headstrong riot hath no curb,  
When rage and hot blood are his counselors,  
When means and lavish manners meet together,  
O, with what wings shall his affections fly  
Towards fronting peril and oppos’d decay!  
(4.4.58-66)

Hal’s own father understands the moral decay that festers in the future King Henry V, and without a censor, even one as unorthodox as Falstaff, it will mean nothing but bloodshed for the kingdom. More than anything, vanity and greed are Hal’s weaknesses, and without a father figure like Sir John to remind the brash prince that he is nothing but

“a weak mind and an able body” (2.4.251-2), Hal will usher doom to his people. Even Falstaff observes this of his beloved prince, assessing:

Prince Harry is valiant, for the cold blood he did naturally inherit of his father, he hath, like lean, sterile, and bare land, manur'd, husbanded, and till'd, with excellent endeavor of drinking good and good store of fertile sherris, that he is become very hot and valiant. If I had a thousand sons, the first humane principle I would teach them should be, to forswear thin potations and to addict themselves to sack. (4.3.117-25)

By the end of *2 Henry IV*, King Henry IV is dead and Hal has become King. With all of the seeds that Shakespeare has planted across *1* and *2 Henry IV* that predict a greedy, vain, and uncurbed Henry V, we see his unscrupulousness at the close of *2 Henry IV*. In his first act as king, he denies Falstaff, the man to whom he owes so much:

I know thee not, old man, fall to thy prayers.  
How ill white hairs becomes a fool and a jester!  
I have long dreamt of such a kind of man,  
So surfeit-swell'd, so old, and so profane;  
But being awak'd, I do despise my dream.  
(5.5.47-51)

With this, Hal banishes the man he calls his “tutor” (62) and warns Falstaff to never come within ten miles of him or else he will be sentenced to death. These are Hal’s last words in the play – and we can presume his last words ever to Falstaff. This is not the way one would expect a king to reward his most loyal counselor and the man who fought in two wars on his family’s behalf.

At this moment when Harry attempts to forget his dearest friend, we cannot help but remember Falstaff’s words to his merry crew in a prior scene. Falstaff, ever the foil to Hal, vows to remember his beloved companions: “Blessed are they who have been my friends,” (5.3.137-8) declares Falstaff. “Master Robert Shallow, choose what office thou wilt in the land, ‘tis thine. Pistol, I will double-charge thee with dignities” (5.5.122-125).

Even for Hal, he promises “I will devise matter enough... to keep Prince Harry in continual laughter.... O, you shall see him laugh till his face be like a wet cloak ill laid up” (5.1.78-85).

Their opposing trajectories now clear, Falstaff’s fate is predetermined in *Henry V*. As Hal blazes as a king – with “famine, sword, and fire” (Prologue 7) at his heels – Falstaff’s flame of life has suffocated and been extinguished. As Falstaff, withered and drawn, bereft of his girth and mirth, rots away like a corpse – “his nose was as sharp as a pen” (2.3.16) as he took his final breaths, a sight that the Hostess declares “most lamentable to behold” (2.1.119-20) – King Henry V simultaneously grows larger, declaring war on France and vowing “No king of England, if not king of France!” (2.2.193). The vanity and gluttony for which he so often chided Falstaff are now apparent in this uncensored and greedy king. It seems more than coincidence, too, that Henry associates himself with God, even suggesting Scroop’s betrayal of him in 2.2 as Adam’s betrayal of the Lord, as Falstaff hallucinates of devils and dark souls burning in hell, shouting his final words from his bed: “God, God, God!” (2.3.19). On his deathbed, could Falstaff be having visions of Harry, the self-proclaimed “God” of England, and the horrors that his unfettered reign will wreak upon Albion? If so, this scene is reminiscent of Henry IV’s final words in the prior play, which includes similar visions of the greedy, vain, uncensored Hal and the terror in store for the kingdom under his reign.

“Falstaff, he is dead, / And we must ern therefore” (2.3.5-6), Pistol proclaims. These words resonate, and with Falstaff now “in Arthur’s bosom” (2.3.9-10), there is no force left in Europe to balance the cold and ruthless Hal that both Falstaff and Henry IV envisioned in 2 *Henry IV*. With Falstaff deceased, all merriment and levity – even during

times of war – are stripped from the play. Now that Falstaff is gone, the mantra of the play becomes: “Trust none; / For oaths are straws, men’s faiths are wafer-cakes, / And Hold-fast is the only dog, my duck; / Therefore, *Caveto* be thy counsellor” (2.3.50-53). Before long, the callous Henry has sent waves of prisoners to die with no regard for the protection of his captives or the rights of war. Scroop, Cambridge, and Gray are sentenced to be drawn, hanged, and beheaded. Bardolph and Nym are both hanged, and Hal takes no responsibility for the souls or fates of his own men. Further, he encourages them to rape and pillage in their war against France. Williams is the only man of Henry’s that is brave enough to speak critically of the King and be perceptive enough to see his utter selfishness: “He [encourages us to] fight cheerfully, but when our throats are cut he may be ransom’d and we ne’er the wiser” (4.1.192-4).

With Falstaff’s departure, all traces of courage and honor seem to dissipate, too. While this may seem contradictory to the image of the cowardly Falstaff that so many critics propagate, one must remember that he was a valiant knight who survived the wars of *1* and *2 Henry IV* (and countless wars before), and he was able to outwit all of his enemies (like Hotspur) or beat them into submission (like Coleville). Now that he is gone, his young page observes Bardolph, Pistol, and Nym in battle and declares:

As young as I am, I have observ’d these three swashers. I am boy to them all three, but all they three, though they would serve me, could not be man to me; for indeed three such antics do not amount to a man. For Bardolph, he is white liver’d and red-fac’d; by the means whereof ’a faces it out, but fights not. For Pistol, he hath a killing tongue and a quiet sword; by the means whereof ’a breaks words, and keeps whole weapons. For Nym, he hath heard that men of few words are the best men, and therefore he scorns to say his prayers lest ’a should be thought a coward; but his few bad words are match’d with as few good deeds; for ’a never broke any man’s head but his own, and that was against a post when he was drunk. They will steal anything and call it purchase.... They would have me familiar with men’s pockets as their gloves or their handkerchers; which

makes much against my manhood, if I should take from another's pocket to put into mine; for it is plain pocketing up of wrongs. I must leave them, and seek some better service. Their villainy goes against my weak stomach, and therefore I must cast it up. (3.2.8-53)

Speaking of manliness and identifying what is right versus what is wrong and what is courageous versus what is cowardice or villainy, it is apparent that Falstaff taught the young page well, and it is obvious that these men are shadows of the noble fighter that the page witnessed in his former master. What lessons could Hal have continued to learn if he had kept Falstaff's counsel?

If Shakespeare intended to announce Falstaff's death early in the play, as Fraser suggests, in order to get his audience to forget about Plump Jack, why make his absence so noticeable, why make the void which he leaves so gaping, and why continue to include moments that evoke the spirit of the fat knight and all that has been lost with his death? Again, unlike the obliterated Falstaff that some critics suggest, he is still very much present throughout the play, and, like Cicero who will be examined in the next chapter, is evoked at the most ironic of times, particularly when Harry is at his most brutish or when the world seems so bereft of the spirit or valor that so often accompanied him. In fact, if Falstaff were meant to be forgotten in *Henry V*, why, then, does Shakespeare resurrect him by name in 4.7? It is during this scene that Gower and Fluellen debate how similar Hal is with Alexander the Great, another conquering king. Fluellen compares Henry V with Alexander of Macedon: "I tell you, captain, if you look in the maps of the orld, I warrant you sall find, in the comparisons between Macedon and Monmouth, that the situations, look you, is both alike..." He continues, "If you mark Alexander's life well, Harry of Monmouth's life is come after it indifferent well, for there is figures in all things" (4.7.24-33). And one of those parallels that Fluellen points to is how Alexander

killed his dear friend, Clytus. “So also Harry Monmouth... turn’d away the fat knight with the great belly doublet. He was full of jests, and gipes, and knaveries, and mocks – I have forgotten his name,” says Fluellen. “Sir John Falstaff,” replies Gower. “That is he,” remembers Fluellen (4.7.46-52). The king hath killed his heart, indeed; it is not merely Falstaff’s closest friends who realize this, but everyone familiar with Henry understands this, too.

Hal’s selfishness and his determination are Alexandrian: “I will have it all mine” (5.2.174-5), he declares. And in the end of the play, he does have it all: Kate, England, Ireland, and France. Perhaps, then, his ruthlessness and his ability to send Falstaff to an early grave were worth it? Yet, if this were Shakespeare’s intention, to celebrate Hal’s separation from Falstaff, then the epilogue to *Henry V* would have been out of place; however, Shakespeare closes *Henry V* not with the image of a victorious King Henry in all of his glory but instead reminds the audience in a postscript that, “Small time... lived / This star of England” (Epilogue 5-6), and not long after Hal’s early death, the House of Lancaster lost France and the crown, and England was made to bleed. Henry IV’s deathbed prophecy comes true: an unfettered Hal *is* his own worst enemy – and the worst enemy of the realm.

Though Falstaff never appears in *Henry V*, Shakespeare does not break his promise from the end of 2 *Henry IV*: he has continued the story with Sir John in it, only paralitically. He had not grown tired of Falstaff, he did not kill the character as a result of the departure of Will Kemp, and he certainly did not obliterate Falstaff from *Henry V*. Instead, he used the character’s absence to shine a glaring light upon the corruption of an unrestrained Hal, one whose blood-thirstiness, ruthless ambition, and lack of humanity



only became visible once Shakespeare decided to set Falstaff to the side. Here, a quote from Elie Wiesel on crafting a work of literature seems appropriate: “Writing is not like painting where you add. It is not what you put on the canvas that the reader sees. Writing is more like a sculpture where you remove, you eliminate in order to make the work visible” (72). This is true of Shakespeare’s paraliptic use of Falstaff, and only with Falstaff’s removal can Hal’s petulance be exposed. Furthermore, with the paraliptic excision of Falstaff in *Henry V*, all the light-heartedness, mirth, revelry, and optimism that had been central in *1* and *2 Henry IV* are removed from Shakespeare’s historical narrative, making *Henry V* a more appropriate precursor to the tragic *Henry VI* plays, which Shakespeare had written earlier in his career.

In retrospect, the massive void left by Shakespeare’s paraliptic use of Falstaff in *Henry V* now conjures some seemingly prophetic words from Falstaff early in *1 Henry IV*:

No, my good lord, banish Peto, banish Bardolph, banish Poins, but for sweet Jack Falstaff, kind Jack Falstaff, true Jack Falstaff, valiant Jack Falstaff, and therefore more valiant, being as he is old Jack Falstaff, banish not him thy Harry’s company, banish not him thy Harry’s company – banish plump Jack, and banish all the world. (2.4.474-480)

## Chapter IV

### *Julius Caesar: Cicero Silenced*

To Renaissance audiences, it would have seemed impossible to tell the story of Julius Caesar's assassination at the hands of Brutus and his conspirators without including Cicero; however, Shakespeare comes close to doing just that in *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*. Cicero is integral to the tale both historically and in Shakespeare's dramatic recreation, but he is only granted a small amount of stage time in Shakespeare's play. According to Plutarch's section on Cicero in *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes*, the biography upon which our modern understanding of Cicero has been drawn and a major source for Shakespeare's Roman plays, Cicero was an important figure in the center of the tumult surrounding the uprising that led to Caesar's death.

He was a friend and advisor to both Caesar and Brutus, and though he was the paragon of humanity, peace, and justice for the Roman people, Cicero met a brutal and barbaric death in the chaos created by the assassination of Caesar: his head was severed from his body, his hands were hewn from his wrists, and they were nailed "on the platform above the Rostra – a spectacle for Romans to shudder at, since they believed that they were looking, not at Cicero's face, but at an image of [the new regime's] soul" (Lintott 126). The violent demise of Cicero, Rome's embodiment of humanity and culture, was a cruel end for the intellectual defender of the realm, and the irony of the peaceful Cicero's savage death was not lost on Shakespeare; instead, he uses it to great effect in his play.

Not only was Cicero the analogue of humanism, justice, friendship, and other noble ideals during his lifetime in Rome, but he was also the paragon of these notions 1,600 years later in early modern England, too. “Cicero’s work was ubiquitous and impossible to avoid in Elizabethan England” (56), explains Andrew Hadfield in *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (2005). His writings were a staple of grammar school and university educations, and his works were some of the most widely published in Britain. Cicero was so ingrained in Elizabethan culture that his *De officiis* “was second only to the Bible as a source of moral wisdom,” and it is arguably “the most influential secular prose work ever written” (Miles 18).

Cicero was the cornerstone of Renaissance humanism, an educational movement suggesting that “a systematic study of classical eloquence would help to bring about a more civilized society” (Headlam Wells, *Humanism* 8). In fact, the rediscovery of Cicero’s work by Petrarch is credited with reviving an appreciation for the classics in Europe after the Dark Ages “had almost completely extinguished literary culture” (19). In Tudor England, there was an attempt to foster a love of humanity and government through studying the liberal arts, and this “was implicit in the whole enterprise [of education], from the elementary sayings of Cato and Cicero on up” (Miola 4). And since “Cicero was the supreme example of the philosopher who devoted his life to service of the state” (Headlam Wells, *Humanism* 9), he was the exemplar to which young schoolboys strove to emulate. As Colin Burrow asserts in *Shakespeare & Classical Antiquity* (2013), these young men “sought to become like Cicero” (41) with their daily exercises that required them to read, memorize, translate, and recite his works. What better way to foster a generation of civically-minded Englishmen who would value the

ideals of courage, honor, and temperance while developing a feeling of allegiance to the greater good of the republic than by having them absorb Cicero's treatises on social virtues?

As popular as Cicero was in bookstalls and in grammar school curricula and university classrooms, he was equally popular on the Elizabethan and Jacobean stages. As Garry Wills states, "In the Renaissance, Cicero was at the peak of his reputation as the defender of the Republic, and that is how he was portrayed on the English stage of the time – in Thomas Kyd's *Cornelia* (1594), the anonymous *Caesar's Revenge* (1595?), and Ben Jonson's *Catiline's Conspiracy* (1611)" (9). According to Clifford Ronan, author of *Antike Roman* (1995), we have record of forty-three Roman plays that were written for the English stage by such writers as Chapman, Massinger, Webster, Lodge, Munday, Fletcher, and Middleton. Nearly every celebrated playwright of the era crafted his own retelling of a famous moment in Rome's history, and in any play in which he appeared, Cicero was a significant character, always depicted as the voice of reason, wisdom, and republicanism.

Ben Jonson's *Catiline His Conspiracy* is the best illustration of how Cicero was portrayed on the Renaissance stage. In Jonson's drama, Cicero is the sole hero who foils the evil Catiline's attempts to overthrow the Roman Republic. Acting as an army of one, "Jonson's Cicero charts a delicate political path in protecting the state. He attempts to uphold the Republican form of government while maneuvering around Catiline's followers, who corrupt the senate's workings" (Lemon 152). In this play, as in most of the plays he appears, "Cicero employs the language of conscience throughout" (150), and in Jonson's portrayal of Cicero as "a pure, principled ruler who upholds the value so

crucial to Rome” (151), he perpetuates the Renaissance understanding of Cicero, particularly by having him thwart the conspiracy with his sharp oratory, which his opponents find is as cutting and debilitating as a blade.

When Cicero is introduced in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, audiences must have expected a similar rendering of Rome’s greatest statesman, and Shakespeare seems to be giving us that version of Cicero that is the voice of “conscience throughout” the moment he walks on stage. In the opening scenes of the play, he appears among the key figures of Shakespeare’s Rome. In 1.2, he joins Caesar, Antony, Calpurnia, Portia, Decius Brutus, Brutus, Cassius, and Casca in leading a great crowd to an assembly. As the symbol of piece and balance, one wonders if Cicero’s placement in the stage notes between Caesar, Antony, and Calpurnia, and Brutus, Cassius, and Casca is intentional. If so, it would be clear during the procession that he has an allegiance to both parties and is positioned between the two factions of Rome, not just physically but philosophically. While he may not have been a proponent of assassinating Caesar, his uneasiness with Caesar’s rise to power and deification were clear. Though he remains by Caesar’s side and leaves with him at the end of the scene, his displeasure of Caesar’s charade with the crown was apparent to all those in attendance. In fact, Brutus notices from afar that “Cicero / Looks with such ferret and such fiery eyes / As we have seen him in the Capitol, / Being cross’d in conference by some senators” (1.2.185-8).

Cicero, who supports the ideals of the republic and the senate over a potential Caesar autocracy, showed great disdain at Caesar’s theatrics in 1.2. By denying a crown offered him from Antony and the people, Caesar stokes the desires of some to see him as Rome’s sole leader, and the bearing of his breast to Casca’s blade to signify his

dedication to the State seemed too much for Cicero to stomach. Cassius asks Casca, “Did Cicero say any thing?” (1.2.278), to which Casca responded, “Ay, he spoke Greek. / ...those that understood him smil’d at one another and shook their heads” (1.2.279-284). No doubt these were critical words spoken of Caesar’s antics; however, it is interesting to note that Cicero chooses to utter his derision in a foreign tongue, especially since Casca then relates the story of Murellus and Flavius being “put to silence” for opposing the pomp surrounding Caesar’s popularity in the capital. This caution on Cicero’s part suggests the shifting power structure in the republic and relays a tense atmosphere of danger, even for a peaceful figure like Cicero, the conscience of Rome.

Shakespeare starts the following scene, 1.3, with Cicero and Casca encountering one another in the tumult of a dazzling storm. Upon seeing Casca, Cicero asks, “Why are you breathless? And why stare you so?” (1.3.2). To this, Casca lays bare his superstitions of the storm and its portents:

Are not you moved when all the sway of the earth  
Shakes like a thing unfirm? O Cicero,  
I have seen tempests when the scolding winds  
Have riv’d the knotty oaks, and I have seen  
Th’ ambitious ocean swell and rage and foam  
To be exalted with the threat’ning clouds;  
But never till to-night, never till now,  
Did I go through a tempest dropping fire.  
Either there is a civil strife in heaven,  
Or else the world, too saucy with the gods,  
Incenses them to send destruction. (1.3.3-13)

He goes on to share other omens with Cicero that he has witnessed and believes to foreshadow the anger of the gods: a slave whose hand was blazing with fire yet did not burn, a lion strutting through the streets of the Capitol, men on fire who walked the streets of the city, and owls shrieking in the marketplace at noon. Cicero, ever the man of

temperance and the voice of reason, admits that these happenings are bizarre, but he is quick to reassure Casca that “men may construe things after their fashion, / Clean from the purpose of things themselves” (1.3.34-5).

If it was not clear that Cicero is an admired counselor of Caesar’s from his appearance in Caesar’s circle in the prior scene, it becomes clear in this scene. Caesar’s appreciation of Cicero’s counsel is apparent when Casca tells Cicero that Caesar “did bid Antonius / Send word to you he would be [at the Capitol] to-morrow” (1.3.37-8). Now that he had eradicated Rome of Pompey, Caesar wants Cicero’s guidance, but, more importantly, he wants to maintain the good will of the people by being associated with their most beloved senator. But an association with Cicero and access to his counsel are not only desired by Caesar – Cicero is a coveted ally of the conspirators, too, who oppose Caesar’s rise.

The following exchange from 2.1 revolves around the conspirators hatching their plan to assassinate Caesar, and a major focus of their conversation is how they can recruit Cicero to their cause:

Cassius:	But what of Cicero? Shall we sound him? I think he will stand very strong with us.
Casca:	Let us not leave him out.
Cinna:	No, by no means.
Metellus:	O, let us have him, for his silver hairs Will purchase us a good opinion, And buy men’s voices to commend our deeds. It shall be said his judgment rul’d our hands; Our youths and wildness shall no whit appear, But all be buried in his gravity. (2.1.141-9)

As the wisest of Romans, and one of the most well-regarded, Cicero is a desirable commodity; the conspirators realize what his “gravity” would bring to their cause. Again, Cicero is regarded by the populace as a defender of the people and protector of the Republic, and he is so esteemed and trusted that the conspirators realize his support would give credence to their attack upon Caesar. Once more, Cicero is established as a central character who audiences expect will play an integral part in the outcome of Shakespeare’s play; after being a focal point of the last three scenes, an observer may wonder if the play would have been more accurately titled *The Courtship of Cicero*. However, we see no more of Cicero after the first act of *Julius Caesar*, and we only hear a report of his death toward the close of the play.

“So important a man as Cicero should not have been introduced... [with] so little significance” (qtd. in Sprague 78), observed Thomas Davies, one of the earliest commentators on Shakespeare, in 1783. Many critics agreed, particularly those who understood how influential Cicero’s works were on Shakespeare and how Cicero was portrayed in other contemporary dramas. This is why few academics have paid any mind to this minimal role, and when they do, it is often along the lines of Arthur Colby Sprague’s assessment of the part. In his essay “Shakespeare’s Unnecessary Characters” (1967), Colby Sprague agrees with Davies that Cicero deserved “far greater prominence” than his paltry role grants him. “The terms in which he is mentioned are arresting” (77), Sprague notes. “Yet he appears in only two scenes and speaks – less than ten lines in all—only with Casca in that of the prodigies” (78). Bewildered by Cicero’s disappearance, Sprague suggests that “sometimes we can only guess” at Shakespeare’s



intent with these omitted characters “—and with no great confidence that we have guessed right” (81).

E.A.J. Honigmann was equally perplexed at Shakespeare’s treatment of Cicero. Honigmann observed, “Cicero, who battled courageously against Caesar’s ambitions, becomes an ineffectual bystander in the play.... Strange, too, that in a play containing such memorable orations, Cicero is given nothing memorable to say.” To Honigmann, Shakespeare “degrades” Cicero with such a lackluster representation of the influential Roman” (“Clash” 122). Honigmann takes issue since, in his view, Shakespeare only uses Cicero functionally, “merely as a ‘feed,’ where anyone else would have done as well.” He continues, “Why then introduce him, when he might just as well have figured as a magic name, like Pompey and Cato? Presented in person Cicero raises expectations (‘great spirits now on earth are sojourning’) that Shakespeare chose not to meet, and thus helps to scale down his great contemporaries, even those who show real signs of greatness in the play” (“Sympathy” 227).

James AK Thomson agreed: “The character of Cicero is a... problem of *Julius Caesar*” (105). In Thomson’s estimation, “We might suppose that Shakespeare, who was admittedly careless in such matters, had merely forgotten... Cicero” (106). Thomson continues, “If the representation of Cicero in *Julius Caesar* appears somewhat unusual, even odd, to us, it cannot be the result of ignorance on the part of Shakespeare, who had been hearing about him all of his life” (107). Paul Stapfer was underwhelmed by Shakespeare’s treatment of Cicero, too, and thus assumed that Shakespeare did not appreciate Cicero. “There is nothing highly original or daring in [his lines], but its very insignificance seems to belong to Shakespeare’s conception of the character; besides

which, though the Roman orator may say nothing important himself, he is twice mentioned in the play in terms sufficiently explicit to make his faults and failings known” (85).

The few other critics to speak of the portrayal of Cicero in *Julius Caesar* mark his insignificance with the terms in which they refer to him: M.M. Mahood accounted the role among his list of Shakespeare’s “bit parts” (115-8), and Barbara Baines dubbed Cicero’s involvement in the play a mere “cameo appearance” (131). No wonder the part has been excised from so many versions of the play over the last several centuries. Starting in 1684, the Theatre Royal’s version of the play eliminated Cicero entirely from *Julius Caesar*, and his few lines were reassigned to Trebonius. This reassigning of lines was continued in the Dryden-Davenant version of the play in the early 1700s, which also eliminated Cicero, and the Covent Garden version of 1766 perpetuated this tradition, eliminating the roles of Messala, Publius, and Lucilius, too, and giving their lines to Trebonius, as well. Cicero is again eliminated in the John Philip Kemble version of 1812, but this time his lines are removed entirely from the play, not reassigned. However, Cicero’s lines are reintroduced to the play in Edwin Booth’s 1871 version of *Julius Caesar*, but they are once again assigned to Trebonius (Ripley). For more than two centuries, audiences of Shakespeare’s greatest Roman play had no knowledge of Cicero’s involvement in the original or of the way he was established by Shakespeare before being abandoned. To this day, many versions of the play still excise Cicero because, as Garry Wills notes in his book *Rome and Rhetoric* (2011), Shakespeare’s strange treatment of Cicero is simply “an even odder use of a character” (2) than any other in the play, perhaps even in the canon.

Wills attempts to find a reason for Cicero's lack of substance in Shakespeare's play. He believes that the actor who portrayed Caesar doubled for Cicero. Wills suggests that "an indirect proof of this doubling is that in modern productions where doubling is not used, the use of a separate actor to speak Cicero's few but impressive lines in the storm is uneconomical – so the lines are dropped, the actor eliminated" (13). Continuing, Wills assumes that the actor who played both roles in Shakespeare's day "was none other than Richard Burbage." He elaborates:

This goes against the general impression that Burbage would play the character with the most lines, Brutus. But a consensus has now formed that in the spectacularly busy 1599 season, *Julius Caesar* was sandwiched between *Henry V* in the spring and *Hamlet* in the fall. Burbage would thus have been rehearsing two of the longest roles in the canon, Henry V and Hamlet, during their overlap with *Julius Caesar*. Shakespeare was letting him get a comparative rest in this play, while using his major resource effectively. (13-4)

In closing, Wills observes that "Burbage undoubtedly played the lead role of Cicero in the 1611 *Cataline's Conspiracy* by Ben Jonson" (14), suggesting that Burbage's reprisal of the part a decade later was more than coincidence and affirms his theory of Burbage playing both Caesar and Cicero in 1599.

While Wills's attempt to find a reason for Cicero's disappearance is admirable, his theory is unlikely. Cicero and Caesar share the stage in 1.2, so it is improbable that the part would be played by the same actor. Stapfer gives a more plausible theory, and one that grants Cicero's portrayal in *Julius Caesar* more artistic potential. He asserts that Cicero's inactivity and unwillingness to take up his own sword and declare a side resulted in his downfall. "He would rather remain inactive, which in the time of civil troubles, when calm wisdom is only a form of selfishness, and when men should be able to range themselves unreservedly on the side that is least wrong, is always a culpable mode of

conduct.” Therefore, Stapfer suggests that Cicero’s inaction in the play was Shakespeare’s indictment of the non-violent Roman who “was to die by the sword, like those who live by the sword, but with this difference – that theirs is an honorable death, while his was inglorious. Such is the moral lesson taught by Cicero’s death, in Shakespeare’s tragedy” (87).

This is an interesting assessment of Shakespeare’s portrayal of Cicero, and Stapfer is the first critic to look for a symbolic reason for Cicero’s discarded part; however, it is contrary to everything we know about Shakespeare’s opinion of Rome’s symbol of humanity. Furthermore, if this had been Shakespeare’s intent, it is likely that Cicero’s role would have persisted beyond 1.3 – at least until the pivotal third act of the play – and if Shakespeare’s true intent was to demean Cicero for his lack of action, then the dramatist would have reveled in the spectacle of Cicero’s beheading rather than having a messenger report his death offstage.

Anne Barton is one of the few critics to have seen the paraliptic pattern that Shakespeare created with his use of Cicero. As she observes, “Although Cicero had no part in the action of *Julius Caesar*, it seems to have been important to Shakespeare that the audience should, from time to time, be reminded of his presence and the controversy associated with his name.” Continuing, she explains, “It is a scattered collection of references but, I believe, purposeful. By keeping the enormous memory of Cicero alive in his tragedy, Shakespeare consistently directs his audience’s attention” (“Art” 125). Again, just as with the example of Mark Antony waving Caesar’s will in front of the plebeians before setting it to the side, Shakespeare draws the audience’s attention to Cicero in the opening scenes and establishes the importance of his role just as he jettisons

him. Barton recognized this, and like the plebeians who were left to wonder what riches are intended for them as Antony continues with his speech, we are left for the last four-fifths of the play to ponder Cicero's whereabouts and to note the lack of a conscience – on all sides – once Cicero goes missing.

As Barton observed, it *does* seem important to Shakespeare that Cicero be not forgotten, though he is not physically present after the first act of the play. We must remember what Cicero represents beyond the conscience of Rome: humanism, liberal arts, the good of the people, a strong republic, and, perhaps most ironically in this play, friendship. By reinforcing this vision of Cicero in the opening scenes of *Julius Caesar* and then removing him from the remainder of the play, Shakespeare seems too be ridding Rome of all these noble ideals, too, and instead replaces them with barbarism, unspeakable violence, a divided and chaotic populace, a government in shambles, and a Rome in which friends cannot be trusted. In a Rome without Cicero, a sense of Darwinism prevails. As Andrew Hadfield notes, “The main republican figure from the last days of the republic was not Brutus, whose actions are a parody of those of his famous ancestor, but Cicero” (168). Hadfield also observes that “the absence of Cicero’s voice within the play serves only to draw attention to his writings,” and that “Cicero’s thought has no role in the militarized society that was developing.” He concludes that Cicero’s “minor part in the action of *Julius Caesar* shows that... between the two violent extremes the republic has retreated with Cicero” (171).

Hadfield’s assessment suggests a paraliptic understanding of Cicero because the noble Roman’s words are recalled, as Barton suggested, at the most ironic and resonant of times. In his famous dialogue *De oratore*, Cicero “rehearse[s] the familiar story of

humanity's progression from nomadic barbarity to a civilized state." He asserts that nothing short of the liberal arts is "strong enough either to gather scattered humanity into one place, or lead it out of its brutish existence in the wilderness up to our present condition of civilization as men and as citizens, or, after the establishment of social communities, to give shape to laws, tribunals, and civic rights." He also defends the dignity of the poet and a poet's power to mesmerize "savage beasts... into stillness by song" (Headlam Wells, *Humanism* 12).

With Cicero's departure in *Julius Caesar*, art is replaced by violence (look no further than the conspirators' spectacle with Caesar's blood), voice is replaced by silence (as seen with Murellus and Flavius), and poets are crushed and killed by a mindless rabble (poor Cinna the Poet). The arts have been perverted and subverted, and culture and humanity has regressed to the barbaric days of beasts that Cicero believed were in a distant past; however, that chaotic past is resurrected within an instant in 3.1 of *Julius Caesar*. Furthermore, Cicero's dialogue on friendship, *De Amicitia*, argues "that friendship helped distinguish men from beasts, and was to be valued above virtually all worldly things" (Hadfield 170). What educated sixteenth-century viewer would not have heard echoes of Cicero's words in Caesar's, "Et tu, Brute?" (3.1.77). This is how Hadfield concludes that "*Julius Caesar* portrays a state that bears only a passing resemblance to the republican ideals established by Cicero, who knew that he was preserving for posterity an ideal that was dying" (Hadfield 170).

To understand the effect that a paraliptic Cicero has on *Julius Caesar*, one must simply remember the climate in which the play was written and performed. When the play first debuted in 1599, England was on the brink of a chaos similar to the one

displayed in Shakespeare's Rome. The childless Elizabeth, who had been the target of many assassination plots, was nearing her death, and without a clear successor to take her place, there were many claimants to her throne, all with their own divided factions of the populace. As James Shapiro explains in *A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare: 1599*, "When in 1599 [Shakespeare] turned again to Rome in *Julius Caesar*, he addressed a pivotal moment in that empire's (if not the world's) tumultuous history. But even as he was writing about Rome, he felt and reimagined these stories as a Christian Elizabethan" (152). He continues:

Moral qualms aside, the real problem with political assassination for Elizabethans – and [*Julius Caesar*] makes this abundantly clear – was that it unleashed forces that could not be predicted or controlled. Assassination was linked with chaos, bloodletting, and potential civil war.... Even as Shakespeare offers compelling arguments for tyrannicide in the opening acts of the play, he shows in the closing ones the savage bloodletting and political breakdown that... were sure to follow. (144-5)

And there is the rub. Perhaps this was a cautionary tale for his fellow Englishmen, a reminder to maintain their humanity and civility – to remember their Cicero! – when the time came, for without that reminder on civic duty and order, England could have faced a bloody and violent power shift that would have reverted them to the barbarism Cicero warned of in his writings a century-and-a-half prior.

As Robin Headlam Wells observes, "The more thoughtful writers of [Shakespeare's] period recognized that Europeans were just as capable of barbarism as the Ottoman hordes that threatened to destroy Christian civilization in the sixteenth century." He continues, "In play after play Shakespeare shows us men... betraying their humanity as they abandon civilized values and descend into barbarity.... One of the

characteristic ironies of Shakespeare's mature work is his heroes' failure to recognize in their own conduct the very barbarism they claim to see in others" (*Politics* 12-3).

Brutus and Cassius understand the gravity of their actions – and perhaps the error of their ways – toward the end of the play. In 4.3, Brutus and Cassius, exiled and preparing for their last stand against Caesar's supporters, realize all that they have lost: Rome, a number of their brethren in the conspiracy, any chance for reconciliation with Antony, and Brutus's wife, Portia, who killed herself in despair. As a sign of the chaos their rebellion has caused, they receive report that one hundred senators were slaughtered brutally in the Capitol, Cicero being among the dead and the only one named. It is at this point that Cassius and Brutus realized that they – and perhaps all of Rome – have reached a point of no return. The two lead conspirators cannot believe that Cicero, the analog of humanity, is gone. "Cicero one?" (4.3.178), Cassius asks in disbelief. Messala, the messenger, has to repeat his message: "Cicero is dead" (4.3.179). And, according to Plutarch's *Life of Brutus*, Brutus "felt more shame at the cause of Cicero's death than grief at the event itself" and blamed himself and his fellow Romans for having "consented to be eyewitnesses of things of which they ought not even to hear" (*n. pag.*). This is a sobering realization, and it is not long after Cicero's death has registered in the play that the tragedy closes with the conspirators defeated and Cassius and Brutus dead.

Mahood, in his catalogue of bit parts, suggested that the role of Cicero was jettisoned out of dramatic economy; however, he observed that Cicero was so important that he "was someone who could not be left out" of *Julius Caesar* entirely, even though his part was "limited to some angry looks... and to a few enigmatic lines" (118). Some angry looks and a few enigmatic lines were all Cicero needed to be effective in



Shakespeare's play, though, and Shakespeare's paraliptic use of the disapproving and cautious character made Cicero, as Arthur Colby Sprague said, "arresting." There is no doubt that Shakespeare's audiences in 1599 would have linked Cicero's absence with the disastrous political and moral events that ensue for Brutus and the conspirators, and they likely would have recognized themselves on the brink of a similar cataclysm as they prepared for a future without Queen Elizabeth and braced themselves for the civil wars they feared lay ahead. And, anyone familiar with Plutarch's *Life of Cicero* would have remembered how the historian and biographer ended his account of Rome's most noble statesman:

[Octavian] Caesar many years later went into the room of one of his daughter's sons; he had in his hands a book of Cicero's but, startled, hid it in his garment. Caesar saw this and, taking the book, he read a large section as he stood. When he returned the book to the young man, he remarked, "An eloquent man, my boy, and a patriot." Furthermore, as soon as Caesar had defeated Antony, being consul himself, he chose as his colleague Cicero's son.... (Lintott 126)

This nostalgic remembrance of Cicero by Octavian and the acceptance of Cicero's philosophies by the younger generation underscore Shakespeare's point to his audience: avoid the shame and regret that Brutus, Octavian, and all of Rome experienced by turning to violence at the crossroads of their nation's future, and never abandon your humanity.

## Chapter V

### *Hamlet*: Fortinbras Delayed

Prior to the *dramatis personae* for each play in Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen's *The RSC Shakespeare Complete Works* (2008), the editors include a list of "Major Parts." Bate and Rasmussen identify these "major" characters by examining the percentage of lines spoken, the number of speeches delivered, and the number of scenes in which each character appears. Most readers familiar with *Hamlet* may glance at this catalog of key parts before reading the Danish play and assume an error has been made when they realize Fortinbras's name is missing (1,922). It seems incongruous that a character as consequential as Hamlet's foil and the Prince of Norway would be absent from this list while the parts of Osric, the First player, and the First Clown are listed. In *Hamlet*, Osric speaks but one percent of the lines in the entire play. Similarly, the First Player speaks only eight times, and the First Clown appears in just a single scene, yet all three of these roles are distinguished as "major." But Fortinbras, the character who sets the plot of *Hamlet* in motion and inherits Hamlet's kingdom at the end of the play, is not? Osric, the First Player, and the First Clown, in comparison to Hamlet, are certainly minor parts; however, when juxtaposed with the role of Fortinbras, the designation is technically an accurate one – though Fortinbras, even in his relative absence, is still a noticeable force in the play.

Fortinbras, the Prince of Norway and Hamlet's rival, speaks only six times in *Hamlet* – little more than ten sentences – even though he is a figure of great significance.

Much like Macbeth, his reputation precedes him, and the audience quickly learns that Fortinbras is a valiant warrior and a leader of men long before he appears on stage. He is the *raison d'être* for the atmosphere of the play, the “main motive of [Denmark’s] preparations, / The source of [Denmark’s] watch, / and the chief head / of this post-haste and romage of the land” (1.1.105-7) at the start. With the threat of invasion from this prince of “mettle hot and full” (1.1.96), Elsinore is under “strict and most observant watch / So nightly toils the subject of the land” with “daily [cast] of brazen cannon, / And foreign mart for implements of war” “such impress of shipwrights, whose sore task / Does not divide the Sunday from the week” (1.1.71-6). While the “pigeon-liver’d” (2.2.577) Hamlet is holed up in his castle, we get word of Fortinbras marching through and around the kingdom, and he is quickly established as the foil by which we are to judge Hamlet. Yet, in the grand scheme, Fortinbras has so little to do in *Hamlet* – less, even, than the First Player and First Clown – that his role does not merit Bate and Rasmussen’s list of major parts.

This – Shakespeare’s minimal use of Fortinbras and what it represents – I contend makes *Hamlet* an astonishing work of genius and cements Shakespeare the most innovative playwright of his time. Shakespeare reveled in experimenting with theatrical convention, particularly at this middle point in his career when he had already mastered the arts of dramatic comedy, tragedy, and history. Having pushed the bounds of revenge tragedy and topped his predecessors several years prior with the sensationally blood-soaked *Titus Andronicus*, Shakespeare seems to have grown tired of Renaissance expectations and began turning convention on its head by taking his dramas and characters in wild new directions. From the time it was first written and performed,

audiences and scholars recognized *Hamlet* as a watershed moment in Shakespeare's career and noted the play as a marked shift in Shakespeare's inventiveness as a playwright. In fact, around the time *Hamlet* appeared on stage, the Elizabethan poet Gabriel Harvey identified Shakespeare as a "flourishing metrician" and praised his poems and *Hamlet*, in particular, as having it in them "to please the wiser sort" (qtd. in Ackroyd 334).

Hamlet's soul-piercing interiority and Shakespeare's vivid poetry in *Hamlet* are often the elements that critics isolate when explaining how the play serves as a turning point in Shakespeare's career. Shakespeare's paraliptic use of Fortinbras, though, could be equally responsible: it demonstrates a remarkable shift in his approach to crafting his characters, and it suggests that Shakespeare was making a conscious decision to take the conventions of revenge drama in an entirely new direction. Fortinbras is intended to be a peripheral character: his specter haunts the borders of the play as much as the ghost of Old Hamlet haunts Elsinore, and the surrounding storm of his army approaching Hamlet's castle to reclaim lost lands gives the already Gothic play a deeper air of constriction and oppression. It is in this marginalization of Fortinbras, this paraliptic use, that Shakespeare demonstrates his intent to revolutionize his approach to drama and the revenge genre itself, particularly in the revenger – Hamlet or Fortinbras – he chooses to make his protagonist. Fortinbras, naturally, is the obvious choice; however, by relegating him to the margins, Shakespeare forces his audience to accept a new vision of what a "hero" may be.

Because of this marginalization, though, Fortinbras has received little critical attention since he first marched upon Denmark and inherited Elsinore from a dying

Hamlet. Even though the brilliance of this role seems to be hiding in plain sight, most critics pay little mind to Young Norway, if they speak of him at all. In modern criticism, he is often identified as a foil for Hamlet alongside Laertes and Horatio, and his inheritance at the end of the play is usually discussed in terms of militarism, but the majority of critics over the last 400 years have overlooked Shakespeare's paraliptic use of Fortinbras as an absent presence.

For example, in *Shakespeare's Workmanship* (1917), one of Arthur Quiller-Couch's biggest criticisms of the play is that "there is too much about Fortinbras, of whom we are thus led to expect that he will have great effect upon what is to follow. Actually he has next to none, though the dramatist seems to start by intending that he should. Moreover, some thirty lines are wasted on [him]" (137). Northrop Frye seems to feel similarly: "Fortinbras junior, at the beginning of the play, is planning a revenge on Denmark: Claudius manages to avoid this threat, but Fortinbras comes in at the end of the play,... [and] of Fortinbras, on whom the hopes and expectations of the few survivors of the play are fixed, we know nothing" (90).

E.A.J. Honigmann saw little purpose for Fortinbras, too. He considered Young Norway "a very minor character" whose off-stage conquests "will seem to some readers totally irrelevant" ("Politics" 132). Not only did many readers and critics find Fortinbras "totally irrelevant," so too did centuries of directors. "We can all remember how often the curtain has been rung down immediately after Horatio's touching farewell, and Fortinbras given no opportunity at all to make his triumphal entrance at the end" (Lawrence 674). In fact, when William Davenant inherited the rights to perform the play from Shakespeare's old company, he shortened Shakespeare's *Hamlet* "by some 841 lines, leaving out most

of the Fortinbras story” (Bevington, *Murder* 84). This version of the play held English stages from 1661-1709, and the proceeding generation of actors and directors in the eighteenth century went a step further and removed Fortinbras from *Hamlet* entirely, “thus allowing the play to end on a tragic high note with Horatio’s tearful farewell and eulogy to his sweet prince” (Bevington, *Murder* 92). This tradition of excising Fortinbras continued through David Garrick’s productions in the late-1700s and John Philip Kemble’s in the early-1800s. As Margreta de Grazia notes, “Not until 1898 did Fortinbras return at the play’s end to take over the Danish throne. For some 200 years of its performance history, no invasion was threatened at the start and no foreign takeover occurred at the end” (61-2). The role was still left out of many stage and film productions in the 1900s, though, too, including Laurence Olivier’s *Hamlet* (1948) and Franco Zeffirelli’s (1990).

While there are many examples of Fortinbras’s excision from *Hamlet*, some have done the inverse and tried to build up the paltry part Shakespeare has assigned to Norway. Goethe, for example, in his novel *Wilhelm Meister*, demonstrates his protagonist’s struggle attempting to produce a traveling version of *Hamlet* and trying to give more substance to the peripheral Fortinbras:

As the producer, Wilhelm considered the diversity of non-Danish interests too liable to confuse the audiences in those German towns where his wandering actors are to mount their show and to whom *Hamlet* will be new. This dispersion was a danger. So he resolved to fuse these interests into a single “background action” – a Norwegian affair – centering around Fortinbras. Hence Laertes travels to Norway and not to France; hence Hamlet is to be shipped to Norway... and not to England. Through this amalgamation, Wilhelm believes, there would be this gain: that Norway, much mentioned in the early scenes, subject of old dispute between the dead Hamlet and the dead Fortinbras, will increasingly press forwards, so that when, at the conclusion of the play, young Fortinbras entered the corpse-littered palace at Elsinore to claim the crown of Denmark, there

would visibly emerge to the fore the embodiment of the mounting background theme.” (Berry 118)

Like Wilhelm Meister, William Empson also questioned Shakespeare’s sparse use of Fortinbras, and Empson assumed: “If the *Ur-Hamlet* did have two parts, it seems clear that their extra time was used on Fortinbras and civil war” (130). These views of the marginalized Fortinbras support a paraliptic construction: the role suggests too much for his absence to be meaningless, and if Empson’s assertion is accurate, then Shakespeare’s decision to restrain the conquering hero Fortinbras to the periphery *is* deliberate. Fortinbras’s mythical stature conjured at the beginning of the play, his haunting presence throughout, and his triumphant arrival at the end are all artfully calculated and carefully implemented.

Though *Hamlet* is arguably the most influential work of literature in the western canon, it is also often assailed for being riddled with gaps and problems, and one of those glaring problems for many is Shakespeare’s paraliptic use of Fortinbras. W.H. Auden, for example, saw little purpose for Fortinbras, finding his subplot too incongruous and disjointed from the play. “*Hamlet* has many faults – it is full of holes both in action and motivation. The sketchy portrayal of Fortinbras is one.” Auden continues, “We hear early about his plans, when Claudius sends word for him to stop. Fortinbras agrees, but wants permission to pass through Denmark on his way to Poland. We see him pass across the stage on the way to Poland, and he returns when everyone is dead. [He] is not properly incorporated into the play” (162).

Harold Jenkins also noted this incongruity, hypothesizing in his essay “Fortinbras and Laertes and the Composition of *Hamlet*” (1974) that Shakespeare must have changed his mind midway through the composition of the play and decided to transfer the duel

and revenge intended for Fortinbras to Laertes, who had the extra motivation of not only avenging his father's death but also his sister's. In composing *Hamlet*, Shakespeare, according to Jenkins's hypothesis, realized of Fortinbras, "His father's deathsmen being already dead,... he lacks a personal antagonist; and of the three bereaved sons in the play he is the only one whose father met his death in honorable combat. Shakespeare no doubt recognized these drawbacks" (99). To Jenkins, this explains why Fortinbras is suddenly placated and diverted from his revenge plot against Hamlet and Denmark and instead sent off to fight Poland for "a little patch of ground / That hath in it no profit but the name" (4.4.18-9), which is no bigger than "an egg-shell" (4.4.53). "That Shakespeare, for whatever reason, has modified his initial plan I do not think it possible to dispute." Jenkins continues, "It may be that Shakespeare came to see that the play would not have room for such embroilments. But I suspect that the cause of the change was deeper. For it might well seem that the threat to peace would come more appropriately from within Denmark than without." Jenkins continues, "The role of revenger, at any rate, for which Fortinbras was never perfectly suited, is more capably filled by Laertes, groomed for it from the outset, as soon as events are ready for him to take it over" (103).

While Jenkins understands the danger in his argument – "Presumptuous as it may be to suppose that one can ever look into Shakespeare's mind in the act of composition..." (95) – he overlooks what Shakespeare actually built into the story paralitically. Fortinbras *is* perfectly suited for the role of revenger: that is the point. In fact, he *should* be the hero of the play, but the fact that Shakespeare leaves him on the periphery and requires us to accept an entirely different hero in Hamlet, a hero that modern audiences recognize but Renaissance audiences would not have, is what made



*Hamlet* so innovative. As G.K. Hunter establishes in “The Heroism of Hamlet” (1963), the Renaissance had clearly defined expectations of its heroes. Hunter imagines Shakespeare keeping the three principal traditions of heroism in mind while creating his plays: (1) the power to command, (2) goodness, and (3) force of personality. Renaissance audiences expected their heroes to be an amalgamation of these three qualities, unifying the king, the saint, and the soldier in one (91).

Hamlet is no leader, though. While he has “the great love the general gender bear him” (4.7.18), he never takes charge of a situation or musters his people. Prince Hamlet can hardly manage himself let alone his subjects or his kingdom, unlike Prince Fortinbras, who summons an army of “lawless resolute” (1.1.98) in his initial plan to conquer Denmark and later commands an army of 2,000 men in his attack on Poland. Hamlet’s goodness is called into question, too, in his treatment of Ophelia, his murder of Polonius, and his orchestration of the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, along with his wish to not only exact revenge on Claudius but ensure that his soul is condemned to Hell. Fortinbras, on the other hand, proves his goodness in his short time on the stage: he grants Hamlet an honorable soldier’s burial and laments the scene he walks in upon, not passing judgment on the various corpses strewn about the stage but instead declaring, “with great sorrow I embrace my fortune,” pitying all from Claudius to Hamlet. And, as for force of personality, Hamlet is a self-professed “ass” (2.2.582) and “whore” (2.2.585), a coward whose awkward and immature behavior isolates him and whose insecurities paralyze him. Contrarily, Fortinbras has the confidence, charisma, and force of will to make enemies like the Danes quake from across the Skagerrak Strait.

Fortinbras is Hotspur perfected: a valiant, noble, fearless, and deadly warrior who has the intelligence, patience, and calculation to achieve whatever he desires. He does not need to march on Denmark to slaughter Claudius and Hamlet to inherit the kingdom as he initially intends, yet he ends the play having accepted the Danish crown, which is more than he wanted in the first place. Hamlet, on the other hand, is a fraudulent hero: our default hero since Shakespeare makes him our protagonist and the central character of the play. He is far from what Elizabethan audiences would have expected of their heroes, though, let alone a hero-revenger. Ironically, Hamlet understands this and would have been in agreement with audience members. One needs look no further than his loathing self-assessment in 2.2 or his tremendous feelings of inferiority he expresses in comparing himself to Fortinbras in 4.4.

Extracting Fortinbras from the play entirely as many directors have done for centuries causes us to lose this understanding of Hamlet – and *Hamlet*. And critics who find the role insignificant do not understand that, “Behind the scene laid in Elsinore, visible to the spectators, is Norway.... These concerns are not ‘off-stage’ or ‘in the wings’ but behind what is physically presented to the audience; [and] will advance and invade the physically visible.” Francis Berry knew this. Continuing, he observes that Norway and Fortinbras “are delivered to the ears of the audience while, as spectators, their eyes are occupied with the ‘here and now’ of the Royal Court of Denmark” (118). Here, we start to see Shakespeare’s paraliptic use of Fortinbras taking effect, just as we did with Falstaff and Cicero in the prior chapters when their spirits are invoked at the most ironic of times. While our eyes are occupied with Hamlet, our minds are on Fortinbras from the moment he is discussed, hero-like, in the first scene of the play.

William Empson hints at this, observing that Hamlet's ineffectual behavior and inability to act on his repeated mantra of revenge "is at the mercy of anybody in the audience who cares to shout out 'Hurry up'" (82). Audiences, once introduced to Fortinbras and his quest for revenge want – and expect – to follow him. He is the familiar stage hero-revenger, and yet we are forced to watch a somewhat cowardly Hamlet (in comparison) spend an excruciating amount of time filled with false starts and lamentations on insecurity. A.C. Bradley recognized this when he said Fortinbras "possess[es] in abundance the very quality which the hero seems to lack, so that, as we read, we are tempted to exclaim that [he] would have accomplished Hamlet's task in a day" (*Tragedy* 94).

As we imagine the heroic Fortinbras gathering his army, passionately arguing the merits and integrity of vengeance with his uncle, recalculating his martial plan for reclaiming his father's lost lands, executing his attack on Poland, and arriving at the gates of Elsinore, we are instead force-fed this unconventional protagonist that Shakespeare makes his greatest – both in the size of part and scope of interiority – and most substantial hero. But this is not what Shakespeare's audience would have expected of a revenge tragedy. "The explosion of litigation in Tudor courts suggests how many impulses toward private revenge the system was struggling to accommodate through public channels," Robert N. Watson observes of the time. "Local justice, based in the competing interests of families, was rapidly giving way to a centralized legal bureaucracy in which personal passions and honour counted for little" (309). Revenge was on the minds of Elizabethans, and they wanted a hero that they could admire vicariously, not one that they would pity.

Shakespeare inverts the conventional hero with his choice of protagonists, though. Audiences until *Hamlet* enjoyed living vicariously through larger-than-life heroes whom they could only aspire to be. That is a basic tenet of human desire and any work of popular literature, and it is as strong today as it ever has been. However, even though average Elizabethans may have wanted to be Fortinbras vicariously, in truth, they were likely to identify more with Hamlet, a self-doubting prince. Renaissance audiences were accustomed to living out their revenge fantasies through the likes of Hieronimo, the brave and righteous hero of Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. Throughout the course of the play, Hieronimo has been working his way to a boiling point, orchestrating the entire revenge with great precision and patience. This sort of control and execution is appealing; however, most average citizens in the same situation would likely identify more with Hieronimo's opposite, Hamlet, who seems too frightened to take the necessary steps to avenge his father's death, and though he tries to orchestrate instances of revenge, he only gets revenge by stumbling into a chaotic situation in which Claudius's death is swift, uninspired, and disappointing to the audience – and disappointing, probably, to Hamlet, too. A poisoned cup, which Dara Kaye's suggests is a gendered weapon and reserved only for Shakespeare's scheming female revengers (besides, of course, Claudius and Hamlet),<sup>8</sup> lacks the theatrical excess of the blood-soaked blades and the lopped limbs that Elizabethan audiences had come to expect of revenge tragedies.

To speak of a murder as “uninspired” may sound macabre, but the creative (and gruesome) ways in which a conventional stage hero exacted revenge was another staple of Elizabethan revenge drama. Plays in this genre, according to Robert N. Watson, are “probably most memorable for their macabre elements: the vivid sadism of the elaborate

killings, and the abuses of severed body parts such as Hieronimo's tongue in *The Spanish Tragedy*, Alonzo's finger in Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling*, the detached hand and leg in *The Duchess of Malfi*, [and] Annabella's heart in Ford's '*Tis Pity She's A Whore*' (310). There are no mutilations or sensational deaths in *Hamlet* with Hamlet as the protagonist – although, one can only imagine the maimed bits Fortinbras would have collected – yet at the same time Shakespeare and his troupe first performed this play at the Globe Theater, the rival company The Children of Paul's was performing a more traditional revenge tragedy across town, with a conventional hero and requisite gore: *Antonio's Revenge*. Considering this juxtaposition, Shakespeare's shift in choice of protagonists becomes even more apparent.

In her seminal work on Elizabethan revenge drama, *Hamlet and Revenge* (1971), Eleanor Prosser credits *Antonio's Revenge* as having "the most extravagantly savage and grotesque scene in Elizabethan drama." She goes on to explain how the hero orchestrates the death of Piero, the villain, which involved:

...tricking Piero into dismissing his attendants, [then] the conspirators bind him in a chair and carry out their detailed plan to torture him to death. Antonio first plucks out Piero's tongue, glorying in the fresh gore on his fist. Then Balurdo, a fool, hurls ludicrous taunts. All take turns triumphing as Piero weeps and then bring him Julio's body to eat, appropriately butchered and roasted. They form a chorus, hurling Piero's crimes at him, and then take turns stabbing him again and again. They are careful, however, to hold off the deathblow as long as possible, "till he hath died and died / Ten thousand deaths in agony of heart." Finally, cursing Piero to Hell, the revengers rush at him "pell-mell." (61)

Hamlet does not do anything like this. In fact, if he were forced to, one gets the sense that he would delay, blunder, or faint.

Now, this is not to say that Shakespeare was incapable of writing a contemporary revenge drama; on the contrary, he did precisely that with *Titus Andronicus*, in which,

again, he pushed conventional revenge drama to its limits, and he created a hero-revenger worthy of Hieronimo and Antonio – and a revenge play involving horrific examples of a rape, a beheading, lopped-off hands, a severed tongue, and cannibalism. As a renowned Roman general, Titus was another figure that Elizabethan audiences could have looked up to and lived vicariously through. Again, one wonders what sort of creative and brutal ways Fortinbras could have devised to reclaim his father's lands. He has a pride and bravado that would have made him an ideal hero-revenger. "In *Hamlet*," David Bevington notes:

Shakespeare revisits the revenge-play motif of *Titus* in a way that transforms it into tragic greatness. A seemingly inherent problem in the formula of the revenge play, as we have seen, is that the protagonist, in his obsessive drive for necessary revenge, becomes dehumanized and unsympathetic to such a degree that the cathartic effect of tragedy is diverted into the kind of savage and wanton destruction we see in the end of *The Spanish Tragedy*, where the spirit of revenge is not satisfied until nearly every person of the play lies dead onstage. ("Tragedy" 58)

This is precisely the point of *Hamlet* and *Hamlet*: Shakespeare provides a more recognizable hero to his audience, one that is more like an average human than an unstoppable killing machine, one that generates a more genuine catharsis in the audience, sympathetic and humanized.

If Elizabethan revengers are, as Watson says, "specialists in the tragic contradiction of shattering the most fundamental rules of civil behaviour on behalf of fundamental justice" (311), then Hamlet is the specialist at shattering the most fundamental rules of revengers and revenge tragedy. Bevington explains that "the play's greatness and the humanity that Shakespeare bestows on his protagonist are not unrelated." In the play, Shakespeare "attempts to exculpate and humanized the revenger... [with] a Hamlet who is thoughtful, introspective, witty, capable of enduring

friendships, deeply moved by the need for human affection both in his family and in romantic attachments, and philosophically inquisitive.” In short, “the humanizing of Hamlet is the strategy needed to counter the dehumanizing thrust of the revenge tradition” (“Tragedy” 59). This, Bevington concludes, is “Shakespeare’s solution to the problem of sympathetic identification posed for him by the revenge-play tradition” (60).

Hamlet’s speech to the players in 3.2 is wickedly ironic on Shakespeare’s part. He has Hamlet give the players advice that the Prince of Denmark cannot follow in his own life: “Be not too tame neither, but let your own / discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the word, / the word to the action” (3.2.16-18). One gets the sense that Hamlet wishes his actions could suit his words, his vows for revenge, but Shakespeare crafts him to be more human than stock character like the revengers who precede him and makes him identifiable as a self-doubting human. Again, this decision to present the audience with Fortinbras, the recognizable revenge hero, at the beginning of the play before paraliptically limiting him to the margin, forces spectators to see their own reflections in the more identifiable figure of Hamlet with his many flaws and failures. They would rather identify with Fortinbras, but Shakespeare will not allow it.

This peripheralization of Fortinbras, this paraliptic use of him, is a conscious decision for Shakespeare, and this too becomes clear in Hamlet’s advice to the players: “any / thing so o’erdone is from the purpose of playing, / whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to / hold as ‘twere the mirror up to nature” (3.2.19-22). Though he does not see Fortinbras’s paraliptic function in Shakespeare’s decision, Watson observes that, “*Hamlet* the drama holds a mirror up to us, in which even the most sophisticated critics have trouble seeing beyond their own reflections. So *Hamlet* is universal, in that each

individual or historical period tends to see it as the story of all humanity; but local, in that each individual or historical period thereby defines that story in its own terms” (170).

It must have been difficult for early audiences to recognize the brilliance in this shift, and accepting Hamlet as their reflected hero must have been equally uncomfortable. To Margreta de Grazia, Hamlet’s constant talk and non-existent action, “gives voice to a new form of deceit: *the deceit of the self*.” It is naturally human to dissemble and use words to compensate for their shortcomings. Hamlet’s vows of revenge “are a cover-up for Hamlet’s real feelings, spoken to himself to convince himself that he is capable of taking revenge – indeed, *more* than revenge – when in fact he shies from the very prospect” (161). She continues, “readers, on the basis of their own experience, and observation, would not be unfamiliar with the psychological phenomenon” (162). Furthermore, as RA Foakes proclaims, everyone in the Elizabethan Period “was a potential Hamlet. Anyone, however noble or fine, might fail by yielding to weaker impulses. Hamlet’s ‘constitutional defect of character’ provided a dramatic example of inaction in a world that summoned men to duty and resolute action... a mixture of strength and weakness such as all men share” (*Versus* 26).

Senecan revenge tragedy inspired and set the standard for Renaissance revenge tragedy, and Renaissance revenge tragedy was inspired by Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*, the standard-bearer for its era. Kyd’s blood-soaked tale of revenge “established many of the themes, plot-lines, and atmospheric traits that the great subsequent tragedies have in common” (Watson 311). Noting Kyd’s genius, Eugene Hill observes, “Like any good poet, Kyd began with what his audience knew – and twisted it, surprising them. Spain was the great enemy of England.... But Kyd places us for most of the drama in the



Spanish court, where England goes barely mentioned. Moreover, Kyd opens the play with two visitors from the underworld who prove very different from the Senecan norm” (331). Shakespeare’s process of genius was a similar one with his choice of Hamlet over Fortinbras, twisting what his audience expected, surprising the audience, and including elements that are a departure from the Kydian norm.

The original *Hamlet* – the *Ur-Hamlet* – likely written by Kyd, the master of the revenge drama, was no doubt the epitome of Renaissance revenge. According to Thomas Nashe, that original version of the play was “English Seneca read by candlelight” (qtd. in Bevington, “Tragedy” 59). In the plays leading immediately to Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, audiences got glimpses of Fortinbras in characters like Henry V and Hotspur. It would have been simple for Shakespeare to have written a play around Fortinbras in the role of the hero-revenger. However, audiences also got glimpses of Hamlet in Brutus, and Shakespeare’s decision to center *Hamlet* on a Brutus-type stripped of all courage, conviction, and valor leaves us with an image more like ourselves.

Upon his arrival at the close of the play, Fortinbras walks into a chamber of horrors in Elsinore: dead bodies are strewn about the stage. In an interesting moment of dramatic irony, he sees the corpse of Hamlet, and Fortinbras, like us at the beginning of the play, imagines Hamlet to be his foil: a brave warrior, a skilled fighter, and a man of action. However, Hamlet is none of these: he is a counterfeit. Fortinbras expects that Hamlet, though, is his equal – a conventional hero – and that their journeys must have been similar, but he has no understanding of Hamlet’s true self or what has transpired here in Denmark. With this misconception, Fortinbras orders a soldier’s burial for Hamlet. One wonders if he would have ordered such honors if he had seen Hamlet in

action – or, better yet, Hamlet’s *inaction* – and one can assume he may regret his decision when he hears what has transpired from Horatio.

Before his death, Hamlet observes the nature of the conventional hero, Fortinbras, and like us, Hamlet must rationalize “his instinctive admiration for a man who can act on his own initiative without restraint, for a man, moreover, in whom ‘the taints of liberty’ – violence, capriciousness, rashness, defiance – are to be commended as ‘the flash and outbreak of a fiery mind.’ Polonius would have admired Fortinbras on exactly the same grounds.” As Prosser observes, “Hamlet has come a long way from the man who held up Horatio as his ideal” (211). And, thanks to Shakespeare, humanity has come a long way from the men who held up Hieronimo, Titus, and Antonio as heroic ideals. This would not have been possible if Shakespeare stuck to convention and did not experiment paralytically with Fortinbras. As William Kerrigan observes, “Running parallel to *Hamlet* is a chronicle history, *Fortinbras of Norway*, in which the prince does not have a line” (124). Had Shakespeare chosen to write this play instead – the play that his audience was expecting – rather than the one in which he paralytically suppresses Fortinbras, then it is quite possible that his career and the whole of drama may have never achieved the heights they did with the creation of the exquisitely mediocre and self-conscious hero Hamlet, the analogue of modern man.

## Chapter VI

### *King Lear: The Fool Abandoned*

To suggest Shakespeare was a propagandistic playwright is a dangerous assertion, and one that most authorities would dismiss. His plays are too ambiguous for anyone to make such a pointed claim. However, if one were to make this argument, they would have their best chance at making a case by analyzing *King Lear*, one of the first plays Shakespeare wrote as an official Groom of the Chamber for the newly crowned James I. Though Shakespeare had grown accustomed to writing and performing plays for Queen Elizabeth in the decade prior, he had never before been a courtier with a royal patron and responsibilities to the monarch. Shortly after the arrival of James in England, Shakespeare had been honored with the title of King's Man, and his acting troupe was now endorsed by James. "The plays that Shakespeare would subsequently write would be powerfully marked by this turn of events" (22), James Shapiro observes in *1606: The Year of Lear* (2015), and *King Lear* is the first play that is distinctly Jacobean.

Shapiro's book attempts to remind modern readers that Shakespeare was as much a Jacobean playwright as an Elizabethan one, and he aims to demonstrate how profoundly Shakespeare's plays were influenced by James's patronage and shaped by the events of the first decade of Stuart reign. Shapiro dedicates the first chapters of his book to James's efforts to unify England, Scotland, Ireland, and France into one kingdom, a "United" kingdom: Great Britain. During this time, James introduced various symbols of unity in an attempt to gain acceptance for his campaign: he created the Union Jack as Britain's

new flag; he minted a new coin for mass circulation called the “Unite,” which had the phrase *Faciam eos in gentem unam* – ‘I will make them one nation’ (34) stamped on the back; and he wore an expensive jeweled headpiece called the Mirror of Great Britain that displayed glittering stones – one from each country in the proposed Union (208). “No domestic or foreign issue would more deeply preoccupy James and his subjects in the early years of his reign,” Shapiro notes, “[...] [however,] James understood that only Parliament could ratify the Union, [so] he did all that he could to reinforce a sense of inevitability” (34).

Shapiro details how, by 1605, “London’s bookstalls were crammed with the latest arguments about Union, as the controversy attracted some of the finest English and Scottish legal and political minds, eager to ingratiate themselves with the king” (38), and one of the most popular books of the time was a reprint of *Basilikon Doron*, a political guide that James had written for his young son in 1599 that warned him of the dangers of dividing an inherited kingdom. In the piece, James wrote, “Make your eldest son Isaac, leaving him all your kingdoms, and provide the rest [of your children] with private possessions. Otherwise, by dividing your kingdoms, ye shall leave the seeds of division and discord among your posterity” (qtd. in Shapiro, 1606 33).

Perhaps trying to reassure the King of his recent decision to name him a “King’s Man,” and perhaps in an attempt to lend his voice (subtly) to support James’s call for unification of the four kingdoms, Shakespeare decided to craft *King Lear*, a tragedy that depicts the disastrous division of an ancient Britain and opens on a scene in which the short-sighted Lear is abdicating his throne and doling out his lands to his daughters and their husbands. When Cordelia, Lear’s youngest and most beloved daughter, refuses to

participate in her sisters' wicked attempts to coax larger portions of the kingdom from their father by exploiting his vanity with false flattery, Lear assumes she no longer loves him and banishes her. Both the King of France and Kent, an earl, witness Lear's rash decision and attempt to reason with him, trying to convince him to neither banish Cordelia nor divide his kingdom between his two false daughters, Regan and Goneril. The King of France recoils at Lear's ill-considered actions and the corruption he has witnessed, addressing Lear with a language of disease and madness, noting that Lear's assessment of his daughter and the division of his lands is "most strange" (213), "monstrous" (215), and "unnatural" (219), both "dismantle[d]" (217) and "fall[en] into taint" (221). Before the end of the scene, Lear has cast Cordelia, Kent, and the King of France from his land, making his only associates dissemblers and servants, neither of which will be brave enough to confront the hot-tempered king – except, of course, for his beloved Fool.

Sadly, in a play where sighted men are blind and blind men are granted vision, and in a play where the wisest characters are the fools and the most foolish characters are the wise, Lear must suffer many hardships before seeing the error of his ways, both in his treatment of his daughter and in his dismantling of his kingdom. However, like the King of France and Kent, the audience understands Lear's folly from the onset, and their only hope for Lear's redemption now rests on Lear's Fool, who is perhaps Shakespeare's most overt attempt at creating a paralytic character. His decision to discard the Fool at Lear's mental and physical nadir in 3.6 results in a gaping void in the play that leaves the audience with a sense of impending doom. Without the Fool's honesty and wisdom, the play spirals toward a tragic end: by the final scene, Lear and his three daughters are dead

– along with a number of their countrymen – and the future of the once-unified kingdom is now uncertain.

However, as with the three paralytic characters that preceded him, the Fool's departure often receives little artistic interpretation from critics and scholars, and because of his unexpected and unexplained absence from the second half of the play, some directors and authorities have found his role to be as negligible as Cicero's or Fortinbras's. In fact, the Fool was cut from productions of *King Lear* for more than a century, from 1681 – 1838. Nahum Tate, who famously rewrote the play, gave the tragedy a happy ending, which saw Lear restored as king and Cordelia married to Edgar at the conclusion of the play. He cuts the part of the Fool, though, entirely, for as Alan Hagar notes in his analysis of the role, "In the neoclassical age that followed Shakespeare's, Lear's Fool was considered indecorous and was removed" (293). Stanley Wells, on the other hand, saw the Fool's removal from Tate's revival as less a matter of decorum and more a matter of trimming the fat. Finding the role inconsequential, Wells claimed in his Oxford Edition of *King Lear* that, "the character of the Fool [is] not required by the plot" ("Introduction" 39), and "he is a function as much as a character" (41). Bizarrely, and overwhelmingly, many other leading Shakespeare authorities have agreed that the Fool – and his absence – has little bearing on the play.

Tolstoy, for example, saw no justification for the presence of the Fool (Orwell 197), and seeing the role as more function than character like Wells, R.A. Foakes asserted in his "Introduction" to the Arden *King Lear* that "After 3.6 the Fool has no function, and it is understandable that Shakespeare should let him drop from sight" (58). Similarly, in his "Introduction" to the Cambridge *King Lear*, J. Dover Wilson observed, "At the end of

3.6, with the storm raging, the Fool vanishes from our sight forever. Shakespeare simply drops him.” Wilson continues, “Shakespeare boldly dispenses with him.... [but] the absence of the Fool in the later stages of the play is hardly noticed, if at all. Our minds are on other things. It is a stroke of dramatic economy” (xxxii-iii).

These “functional” assessments of such a rich, brilliantly-crafted, and symbolic character overlook his paraliptic potential, and granting the Fool’s disappearance such little artistic possibility limits a character that Shakespeare has been purposefully building and positioning throughout the play. Wilson’s suggestion that the Fool’s absence is “hardly noticed” is difficult to accept given the importance of the Fool earlier in the play, when he alone is left to point out the folly of Lear’s actions. Furthermore, it should be noted that nearly every modern editor or director of *King Lear* feels an obligation to give the audience closure on the character, either by glossing thin explanations for his absence in copious footnotes at the end of 3.6 or by orchestrating elaborate stage deaths for the Fool after he speaks his final lines in the hovel. Though such efforts undermine the Fool’s lingering paraliptic effect, it does cast into doubt Wilson’s assertion the absence of the Fool is “hardly noticed, if at all.”

After 3.6, there is no further appearance of the Fool, even though he has been at Lear’s side since his introduction in 1.4. In fact, up until his departure, whenever one is present you expect to see the other: they are seemingly inseparable. However, there are no further references to the Fool after act 3, though some would suggest that Lear’s use of the term “fool” when he cradles the dead Cordelia in his arms at the end of the play – “And my poor fool is hang’d! No, no, no life!” (5.3.306) – is actually a reference to the

off-stage, unmentioned death of the Fool. While most critics agree that this is no more than a term of endearment for his hanged daughter, Harold C. Goddard wonders:

“Why did Shakespeare create one of the most beautiful and appealing of his characters – perhaps his masterpiece in the amalgamation of the tragic and the comic – only to drop him completely out a little past the middle of the play? ... Surely the whole point of the phrase [“Now my fool is hang’d”] is that Lear is referring to both Cordelia and the Fool. His wandering mind has confused them... has *wedded* them would be the better word.... Think how [the Fool] adored Cordelia and pined away after she went to France! Surely this is the main reason for Shakespeare’s banishing the Fool from his play – that he might reappear united to Cordelia on his dear master’s lips.... (And the supererogatory Nahum Tate thought this drama lacked a love story, and proceeded to concoct one between Edgar and Cordelia!) (162)

This notion of a subtextual love story and a “*wedded*” Fool and Cordelia in the mind of a dying Lear is doubtful; however, such an imaginative theory for the Fool’s dismissal – to have him conjured radiantly in the final scene as Lear’s ideal husband for Cordelia – is a testament to how far audiences and critics will go to try to find an explanation for the large void left in the Fool’s wake, again contrary to what Dover Wilson had suggested.

Isaac Asimov believed that Lear’s use of the term “poor fool” in 5.3 is no more than a “sad term of affection for Cordelia,” not a conjuring of the vanished Fool. However, Asimov admits, “We might long to have [the phrase] apply to the Fool, so that there could be one mention of him anyway from Lear’s lips, even if it is only to hear that he was hanged...” (51). Asimov again manifests his desire for closure to the discarded Fool saying, “Yet it is hard that Shakespeare didn’t see fit (or, more likely, carelessly neglected) to grant him a single line as epitaph from Lear” (37).

This undercutting phrase – “carelessly neglected” – has been applied by various critics to the prior three paraliptic characters in this study. Regarding the Fool’s



departure, the most surprising proponent of this theory – that Shakespeare simply forgot about his vibrant Fool midway through the play – is A.C. Bradley, the character critic who made his name exploring character gaps and ambiguities attempting to find a deeper meaning that he believed Shakespeare imbued into his characters. In his masterwork of character criticism, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904), Bradley says, “It seems doubtful whether [Shakespeare’s] failure to give information about the fate of the Fool was due to anything more than carelessness or an impatient desire to reduce his overloaded material” (238). Later, Bradley continues this line of thinking: “[Shakespeare] tells us nothing of the Fool’s fate. It seems strange indeed that Shakespeare should have left us thus in ignorance. But we have seen that there are many marks of haste and carelessness in *King Lear*” (289).

Bradley reiterates this notion once more in his note “Did Shakespeare Shorten *King Lear*?” saying:

This prevalence of vagueness or inconsistency is probably due to carelessness; but it may possibly be due to another cause. There are, it has sometimes struck me, slight indications that the details of the plot were originally more full and more clearly imagined than one would suppose from the play as we have it; and some of the defects to which I have drawn attention might have arisen if Shakespeare, finding his matter too bulky, had (a) omitted to write some things originally intended, and (b) after finishing his play, had reduced it by excision, and had not, in the omissions and excisions, taken sufficient pains to remove the obscurities and inconsistencies occasioned by them. [This explains] the ignorance in which we are left as to the fate of the Fool, and several more of the defects noticed in the text. (416)

Besides these attempts to explain the Fool’s disappearance in *King Lear*, two predominating theories have been seemingly canonized over the last century, and they are reasons that have been applied to the prior three paralytic characters, too. First, many critics believe, as William Hazlitt did, that the Fool “is dropped in the third act to make

room for the entrance of Edgar as Mad Tom, which well accords with the increasing bustle and wildness of the [play]” (397-8). Northrop Frye believed this, too, and asserted the same theory in *Northrop Frye on Shakespeare* (1986),<sup>9</sup> as did R.A. Foakes in *Hamlet Versus Lear* (1993).<sup>10</sup> To them, when the wild and madcap Poor Tom arrives, there is no longer a need for such a prosaic jester as Lear’s Fool, so he is supplanted without a second thought. This is reminiscent of Harold Jenkins’s suggestion in the prior chapter that Shakespeare may have replaced Fortinbras mid-way through *Hamlet* with Laertes, whose “situation of seeking vengeance for his father’s death instead of the reconquest of his lands brings him closer to the hero” (97), making him the better foil for Hamlet, just as Hazlitt suggests Mad Tom is the better foil for Lear.

On the surface, this may seem plausible: Edgar’s antics and songs as Poor Tom far exceed any nonsense that Lear’s Fool appears capable of, and artistically it would appear appropriate for a madman to now accompany an insane Lear instead of his wise fool. However, Poor Tom cannot be a sufficient replacement for the Fool since Poor Tom disappears with the Fool at the end of 3.6. For the remainder of the play, Edgar sheds the Tom O’Bedlam character, and if he is disguised at all, it is as a simple beggar, not the “unaccommodated man” who speaks gibberish. Therefore, the idea that Poor Tom’s appearance in one scene – a scene shared with the Fool – would usurp the Fool seems unlikely.

The more likely theory for the Fool’s absence, and the one that has become somewhat concretized over the last century, is one of theatrical limitation, similar to some of the explanations for Falstaff’s omission in *Henry V* and Cicero’s disappearance in *Julius Caesar*. Since the Fool and Cordelia never appear on stage in the same scene,

and since the play has a large *dramatis personae* and a limited number of actors, many critics believe that the Fool and Cordelia were played by the same actor. Hence, with Cordelia's return in Act 4, there is no one left in Shakespeare's company to play Lear's loyal Fool. Once more, in the eyes of many critics, theatrical economy prevails over Shakespeare's genius and art; however, there is a glaring contradiction to this theory that casts it into doubt: many leading scholars also believe that the Fool was played by Robert Armin, who, in his middle-age, would not have doubled as Lear's youngest daughter. Cordelia would have been played by a young boy, and while some have theorized that Lear's Fool could have been played by a child – Lear does refer to him as “my boy” at certain points in the play – the role seems to have been written exclusively for Armin, who would have reveled in its wit and poetry.

All of these attempts to explain the Fool's disappearance demonstrate the power of his absence. Clearly, the Fool is Shakespeare's most effective paraliptic character, and the playwright even telegraphs his intention to abandon his analog for wit and wisdom. From the Fool's introduction in 1.4 until the moment he departs in 3.6, he foreshadows his impending disappearance. Though the Fool speaks in riddles, his message is clear: while he is a fool, he is not foolish; his wits will not be compromised by Lear's witlessness; and his life will not end with Lear's death. His love for Lear is unquestionable and his devotion to the mad King is admirable, but as Shakespeare establishes, the Fool is a wise man and the only voice of reason in the play, and he will not make the error of allowing his love for Lear to endanger his own life, and if Lear is beyond his help, then the Fool understands that he will have to flee for his own safety. The fool is a prophet – he says so himself: “I'll speak a prophecy ere I go” (3.2.80) – and

he understand what fate awaits Lear (and himself!) if Lear cannot regain his sanity and swiftly undo his errors from the opening scene of the play.

As with all of his paralyptic characters, Shakespeare introduces Lear's Fool as a significant figure early in the drama to serve as a foil for the protagonist, and being Shakespeare's greatest paralyptic character, Lear's Fool is almost a perfect amalgamation of the three prior paralyptic characters that preceded him. He embodies the mirth and wit of Falstaff, and, like Sir John, he has a genuine intent to provide his king good counsel. He also embodies the wisdom and conscience of Cicero, and just as Cicero's presence represents stability in Rome, so, too, does the Fool's presence represent stability in Britain. And, to an extent, the Fool is as fearless as Fortinbras and has a similar desire for restoration as Young Norway does. All of these qualities – mirth, wit, counsel, wisdom, conscience, stability, fearlessness, restoration – exit the world of the play when the Fool disappears, which ushers in the chaos and great confusion that consumes the realm of Albion.

Introduced as the king's closest confidant and ally in the first act of the play, the Fool is quickly established as Lear's only stabilizer. We learn early how dependant the newly retired king is on his jester. Prior to the Fool's arrival, Lear seems lost without him. He calls for the Fool half-a-dozen times after he returns from a hunting trip and prepares for dinner in Goneril's castle. Shortly after sending one attendant to find his companion, Lear sends another attendant to hasten the search. It is as if Lear cannot imagine dinner or an evening without the Fool at his side. To him, the atmosphere of the castle is so dull and quiet without the Fool that he observes, "Where's my Fool? Ho! / I think the world's asleep" (1.4.47-8).

Like a child demanding a toy, Lear seems unable to function without his Fool present. Their relationship is established as a strong one, and before the Fool arrives, we come to learn what Lear admires in a close confidant like the Fool. When Kent, Lear's banished ally who returns disguised as Caius the servant, approaches the king and requests to be one of his attendants, Lear interviews him, and we can clearly see what qualities the king expects in his associates: honest counsel, delivering plain messages bluntly, and unwavering devotion. Shortly after the Fool arrives, we see that he has each of these honest and direct qualities.

Again, the Fool's departure is quite telegraphed, and from the moment he walks on stage, he is already expressing his intent to leave Lear's service should the king not attempt to rehabilitate his kingdom and reconcile with Cordelia. In fact, at the moment he enters the play, the Fool tries to hire Kent to take his job and attempts to crown Kent the king's new jester by offering Kent his coxcomb. As if the cap is cursed, he then tries to pass it off to Lear himself, saying "Sirrah, you were best to take my coxcomb" (1.4.95). His words mirror his gestures as he attempts to rid himself of his responsibilities: he is willing to hand over his title to anyone who will accept it, and both his language and actions indicate his disapproval of Lear's recent decisions.

By suggesting that it is better for Lear to wear the clownish cap than Kent, not only is the Fool calling Lear the most foolish character on stage, but he also seems to be suggesting (prophetically) that Lear will have no companions left if he does not change his ways. If there is no one left to be Lear's fool and wear the jester's coxcomb, then Lear will have to be his own fool since he will have been abandoned by all of his followers. While this may seem a ridiculous notion to Lear so early in the play – at this point, he has

one hundred men in his service – the image seems to strikingly forecast the mad Lear’s in 4.1 when he is alone and dancing in the wilderness near Dover Cliff wearing not a jester’s cap but a crown of weeds and flowers, entirely abandoned. When Lear is reduced to this shell in 4.1, there is no sign of Kent, Edgar has gone to attend to his blinded father, the Fool has disappeared, his hundred knights have all scattered, and Lear’s daughters have cast him out. Though the comfortable Lear of 1.4 cannot imagine such a fate, the Fool sees that future and explicitly states: “I had rather be any kind o’ thing than a Fool” (1.4.185-6).

When asked why he wants to leave the King’s service, the Fool responds bluntly, “Why? for taking one’s part that’s out of favor” (1.4.99-100). Speaking in sarcastic riddles, the Fool continues, “this fellow has banish’d two on’s daughters, and did the third a blessing against his will” (1.4.102-3), which suggests that Cordelia was the fortunate one for escaping Lear and his crumbling kingdom. The Fool almost seems to envy Cordelia for not being subject to Lear’s folly or the cruel reigns of Goneril and Regan. In fact, the Fool tells Kent directly that “if thou follow him, thou must needs wear my coxcomb” (1.4.103-4), once more trying to transfer his title and calling Kent a fool for wanting to be in this foolish King’s service. Again, the Fool is a prophet, and he foresees the end that is in store for Lear and those around him, and it is obvious he wants to avoid that fate himself.

Regardless of his title, the Fool is the wisest character in the play. About this, there is little argument, and his philosophy, which makes no sense to Lear at such an early point in the play, is:

Have more than thou showest,  
Speak less than thou knowest,

Lend less than thou owest,  
Ride more than thou goest,  
Learn more than though trowest,  
Set less than thou throwest;  
Leave thy drink and thy whore,  
And keep in a' door,  
And thou shalt have more  
Than two tens to a score.  
(1.3.118-127)

In short, to prosper, one must not gamble with his possessions, must pretend to know less than he says, must always have a plan in mind, and must stay out of the public eye during times of scrutiny and controversy. This riddle, which Lear believes is nonsense, demonstrates the Fool's pragmatism, conservatism, and intelligence. Though he is a faithful servant of the king's, this riddle suggests that the Fool has alternative plans should Lear and his kingdom devolve any further. So, not only is this advice that he is sharing with Lear, but implicitly the Fool is saying that *he* has more than he shows and speaks less than he knows, and, if he senses danger, he will ultimately do what is in his best interest: flee.

Lear still believes at this point in the play that he is supremely powerful (and safe), and he remains confident in his decision to banish Cordelia and divide his realm between Regan and Goneril. He is still too obtuse to grasp the Fool's wisdom: vanity and misplaced self-confidence continue to blind Lear to the forthcoming tragedy. The Fool understands this, though, and that is why his rebuke of Lear's decisions continues throughout the entirety of 1.4. Because he is an "all-licens'd Fool" (1.4.201), he may be more confrontational and forthright than a traditional court clown or royal jester, and he takes liberties with this designation for Lear's own good, trying to get Lear to see the errors of his ways.

The Fool warns Lear of the dangers awaiting him if he does not take swift action against his daughters, relating to him the story of the hedge-sparrow and the cuckoo: “The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long, / That [it] had it head bit off by it young” (1.4.215-16). With Goneril and Regan’s rise, he tries to explain to Lear, “So out went the candle and we were left darkling” (1.4.217). His attempts to enlighten Lear and bring him out of the darkness are relentless, and the Fool only goes silent when Lear starts to come to terms with his situation. After Goneril scolds her father for his idle life in retirement, insinuates that he should only associate with other useless old men, and dismisses all of his followers, Lear starts to register the Fool’s words and begins to regret his decision of giving power – and half his kingdom – to his eldest daughter.

His understanding is now swift, and the Fool needs say no more. Lear calls Goneril a “degenerate bastard” (1.4.253) and a “thankless child” (1.4.288), curses that “her womb convey sterility, / Dry up in her the organs of increase” (1.4.278-9), and he beats his head with regret, lamenting “O Lear, Lear, Lear! / Beat at this gate, that let thy folly in / And thy dear judgment out!” (1.4.270-2). He recognizes now that his error is one of “Life and death!” (1.4.296), yet he still considers himself lucky to have his daughter Regan. One can imagine the Fool’s silent observation of Lear’s denunciation of Goneril, perhaps nodding his head with excitement as Lear starts to see the error of his ways. Upon hearing Lear’s plan to seek out Regan, though, and Lear’s expectation that Regan will “flay [Goneril’s] wolvisish visage” (1.4.308) for her treatment of Lear, the Fool, no doubt dejected, understands that Lear has another rude awakening ahead of him. No wonder his satirical barbs start up immediately upon departing the castle again, opening 1.5 insinuating that Lear is brainless.



Once more, the Fool foresees the future, predicting that the welcome Lear will receive from Regan will be as cold as his departure from Goneril. Having sight, but more importantly insight, is a key theme to the play, and now the Fool shares with Lear one of his wisest observations. In a play where old men are blind, either literally or figuratively, the Fool reminds Lear that men have an eye on either side of the nose so “that what a man cannot smell out, he may spy into” (1.5.23). While Lear does not want to believe the Fool’s suggestion that both of his daughters have been false and his kingdom is in danger, we can begin to see doubt crawl into Lear’s mind. “O let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven!” Lear cries. “Keep me in temper, I would not be mad” (1.5.46-7).

However, when at the end of the play Lear finally realizes that the Fool has been the voice of reason and wisdom, he remembers the Fool’s comments on eyes and noses. Having been disowned by both of his daughters and abandoned by his hundred knights, all of which were dissembling sycophants, Lear says:

They flatter’d me like a dog and told me I had the white hairs in my beard ere the black ones were there. To say ‘ay’ and ‘no’ to every thing that I said! ‘Ay,’ and ‘no’ too was no good divinity. When the rain came to wet me once and the wind to make me chatter, when the thunder would not peace at my bidding, there I found ‘em, there I smelt ‘em out. Go to, they are not men o’ their words. They told me I was everything; ‘tis a lie.  
(4.6.96-105)

Notice here that Lear now understands the Fool’s advice to use both his sense of sight and smell to identify a person’s true nature and intentions. Lear laments having taken these flatterers at face value and not “smelling them out” earlier. Now, Lear is alone, disowned, helpless, and turned out to battle the winds and the cold on the heath. Finally, the Fool’s wisdom is clear, and it is not until he is deprived of everything that he is able to realize the magnitude of his error.

Lear's lesson is a cruel one, but it is all of his own making. When rejected by both Regan and Goneril in 2.4, Lear marvels, "I gave you all –" (249) and "made you my guardians, my depositaries" (251). Now, one of the Fool's prior songs makes sense to Lear: "Fathers that wear rags / Do make their children blind, / But fathers that bear bags / Shall see their children kind." With this, Lear's heart is broken, but his eyes are finally open. And, of course, with Lear coming to this understanding, Shakespeare, relentlessly masochistic in this play, has Lear also acknowledge, "My wits begin to turn" (3.2.67).

Now, Lear's descent into madness is swift, and if the audience has any hope for Lear's survival and the restoration of the kingdom, it lies with the Fool. Here, though, an interesting transformation comes over the Fool. With Lear having learned his lesson and having been stripped of all he owned, the Fool's role changes. He no longer has to use his wit to try to get Lear to see the light. Lear now fully understands his folly, and the Fool can return to his traditional antics. As such, we see a much gentler, more clownish Fool whose sole purpose now becomes entertaining and distracting the king from his heartbreak. The king's ever-stable presence, the Fool takes pity on Lear and adjusts to what his master needs: earlier in the play, Lear needed the harsh lashing of a jester's wit; now, though, the sickly Lear only needs compassion. Loyal to the end, the Fool is the only one to accompany Lear to the heath. When Kent asks a passing gentleman in the storm where he can find the King, he is told on the heath battling the storm. When he asks the passerby who the King is with, the reply is, "None but the Fool, who labors to outjest / His heart-strook injuries" (3.1.16-7).

By the time they find shelter, Lear's madness is absolute. He and Edgar disguised as the madman Poor Tom share nonsense together; he has visions of Hell, devils, and

hounds; and he imagines a trial for Regan and Goneril, seeing them materialize before his very eyes. As his sanity slips away, the storm rages outside, and it becomes strikingly apparent to the Fool how mad Lear has become when the king mistakes a joint-stool for his daughter Goneril and invites Poor Tom to join his hundred knights, who Lear has forgotten have abandoned him. Here, now, the Fool realizes he must take his own advice from earlier in the play, and now that the Lear he once knew is forever lost, the Fool must only look out for himself going forward. Lear is beyond help – Kent confirms it: “His wits are gone” (3.6.87) – and if the Fool were to stay in his service any longer, he, too, would be part of the tragedy that awaits Lear and his followers in the final scene of the play. He is prophetic – he has seen it.

Note, though, that the Fool does not abandon Lear. When Gloucester arrives at the hovel at the end of 3.6, he promises Lear “both welcome and protection” (3.6.91) from loyal followers in Dover. Understanding that Lear will be cared for in Dover, the Fool helps bear his king’s motionless body to where a crowd of supporters await him. Once there, though, the Fool leaves, realizing that there is no purpose left for him to serve as a jester to a witless king, especially since he understands that only bloodshed and terror are in store for Lear’s allies. Only now when Lear is beyond salvation does the Fool disappear into the night.

For critics to suggest that his absence from the remainder of the play is mere dramatic economy, carelessness on the part of Shakespeare, or insignificant, they have truly overlooked much of the brilliance that Shakespeare has built into this paralytic character and his ensuing absence. Again, the Fool’s departure should be no surprise – unlike his other paralytic characters, Shakespeare has prepared us for the Fool’s

disappearance since the start of the play. When Kent is in the stocks in 2.4, the Fool shared some wisdom with him: “Let go thy hold when a great wheel runs down a hill, lest it break thy neck with following; but the great one that goes upward, let him draw thee after. When a wise man gives thee better counsel, give me mine again” (71).

The Fool has stayed by his master’s side until Lear is safe, but he had no more to give his king, and with that, he must now walk a different path, one that will not result in his neck being broken, either figuratively or literally. His final words, again spoken in a riddle, symbolically underscore his decision. Lear, before drifting off to an insanity-induced sleep, tells the fool “Make no noise, make no noise, draw the curtains. So, so; we’ll to supper i’ th’ morning” (3.6.83-4). Lear’s language is garbled madness, and in return the Fool, no doubt saddened at the realization of Lear’s complete insanity, responds, “And I’ll go to bed at noon” (3.6.85).

Once again, the Fool’s language has double meaning. On the surface, he seems to be matching Lear’s nonsense with his own contradictory statement, but the “go to bed at noon” was also an Elizabethan flower that “shutteth it selfe at twelve of the clocke, and sheweth not his face open until the next daies sunne do make it flower anew” (Foakes, *Lear* 292). Like the flower that protects itself by self-containment and reinvents itself on the dawning of a new day, the time has come for the Fool to retreat to safety and prepare for his new life without Lear – a life that he will adjust to since this world is no more than a “great stage of fools” (4.6.183). In doing so, Lear’s Fool avoids the bloodshed of the war between France and England and the heart-wrenching deaths of Lear and Cordelia, which, by this point, his antics and wisdom were impotent to prevent.

This paraliptic reading of the Fool's disappearance provides a counterpoint to R.A. Foakes's belief that, "about the disappearance of the Fool, I doubt if anyone watching a performance is troubled by it" (*Lear* 57). On the contrary, the Fool's absence and the absence of everything he represents is troubling, and his missing spirit is palpable in the dark final acts of the play. Through a paraliptic lens, this "marginal" and often critically dismissed character takes on new life and adds a further dimension to the theme of the play and the lessons that Lear is forced to learn about love and loyalty. The audience gets a sense from the moment the Fool is introduced that Lear will survive so long as his faithful Fool is by his side, but with his disappearance from *King Lear*, playgoers and readers lose any sense of hope that the Fool and his shrewd wisdom once represented. From 4.1 on, readers and audiences cannot help but sense the impending doom that engulfs the remainder of the play. Now, a line from his first appearance echoes: "So out went the candle and we were left darkling" (1.4.217). The Fool illuminates every dark corner of this play; however, once he is gone, nothing remains but despair.

Towards the end of the play, Lear regains his wits long enough to watch his line extinguished and see all of his children dead. Lear, the king and analog of ancient Britain, takes his final breath realizing the gravity of what he has done, resulting in the fracture of his family and leaving behind a kingdom that is "gor'd" and split in "twain" (5.3.320-1). Though the Fool has been gone for the last half of the play, he is recalled in the imagery of the butchered and bleeding kingdom that closes the play. Here, his earlier words resonate:

Fool: Nuncle, give me an egg, and I'll give thee two crowns.

Lear: What two crowns shall they be?

Fool: Why, after I have cut the egg I' th' middle and eat up the meat, the two crowns of the egg. When thou clovest thy [crown] I' th' middle and gav'st away both parts, thou bor'st thine ass on thy back o'er the dirt. Thou hadst little wit in thy bald crown when thou gav'st thy golden one away. (1.4.155-63)

Had Lear not divided his unified kingdom and traded in his golden crown for his daughters' two hollow crowns, perhaps this tragedy would have ended with only Lear's death. Instead, the final image the audience is left with is that of a carved Britain, its corpse bleeding, with gaping scars that may never heal. This feels like an appropriate ending for a play written by Shakespeare, the King's Man, during James's campaign for unification. As Shapiro notes, King James and his supporters seized every opportunity to educate the people of Britain "in the benefits of unity but also in the dangers of divisions" (1606 36), and what more horrifying tale could a playwright conjure about a divided realm than *King Lear*? Certainly, this message – and, ultimately, the message of the paralytic Fool – was not lost on Shakespeare's audiences in the early 1600s.

## Afterword

The “comeback” of character criticism that Charlotte Scott detailed in the December 2013 *Shakespeare Survey* has continued to gain momentum over the last two years. In 2014, Cambridge University Press published W. B. Worthen’s *Shakespeare Performance Studies*, which included a large section analyzing the resurgence of character criticism and aimed to place “important contemporary Shakespeare productions in dialogue with... the function of character in cognitive theater studies” (Front matter). In 2015, Oxford University Press released Lorna Hutson’s *Circumstantial Shakespeare*, which intended to “offer original account[s] of Shakespearean characters” and provide “clear analysis of the topic of ‘character’ in Shakespeare criticism” (*n. pag.*). Both Worthen and Hutson use the same term to discuss this resurrection of character criticism, too: “new character criticism.” First coined on page one of Yachnin and Slight’s *Shakespeare and Character* in 2009, the term is now gaining acceptance, which only strengthens the movement’s revival, again proving Marjorie Garber’s theory that what’s old in Shakespeare studies is often new again.

As discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, the most fertile characters to study as “new character criticism” finds its footing are those lesser-known characters who have received little attention from past generations of character critics. The most significant recent work to do this is Tina Packer’s *Women of Will* (2015), one of the best-selling books of Shakespeare criticism in the last year. Though most would characterize Packer’s book as a work of feminist theory or gender study, she dedicates over 300 pages to

analyzing Shakespeare's female characters, and she uses these strong Shakespearean women as gateways to develop new understandings of Shakespeare's plays. Moreover, she assigns full chapters to some of Shakespeare's less examined roles: Joan of Arc, Margaret of Anjou, Elizabeth Woodville, Volumnia, Goneril, and Regan. Of course, Juliet, Beatrice, Cleopatra, Cressida, and Rosalind each get their own chapters, too, and Ophelia, Desdemona, and Cordelia are grouped together in a separate chapter, but Joan, Margaret, Elizabeth, Volumnia, Goneril, and Regan receive the same level of attention from Packer as Beatrice and Rosalind and Ophelia had received from critics in past centuries.

The paralyptic characters analyzed in this study deserve that same level of scrutiny. Though the four characters discussed in the prior chapters represented Shakespeare's development of paralyptic characters, from Falstaff in *Henry V* through the Fool in *King Lear*, they are not Shakespeare's only paralyptic characters. Shakespeare's use of paralipsis to introduce and dismiss characters for effect began during the middle of his career, but by the time he created Lear's Fool, Shakespeare had perfected his use of the meta-rhetorical principle behind paralipsis to craft characters. He continued to create paralyptic characters in his later plays, though: Hecate, Seyton, and the Third Murderer in *Macbeth* can all be considered paralyptic to varying extents, as can King Cymbeline in *Cymbeline*. All of these characters come and go in their respective plays, leaving audiences to ponder what persists and lingers in their absences – particularly in the case of the titular Cymbeline, who hardly appears in his own play. Similarly, *Pericles* has characters that could also earn the paralyptic designation, though an analysis of the



paralipitic settings may be more intriguing: Antioch, Tyre, Tarsus, Pentapolis, Ephesus, Mytilene.

However, after Shakespeare wrote *King Lear* and created the paralipitic Fool, he had another drastic experimental shift in his approach to playwriting, and what he began experimenting with in his middle plays – using paralipsis meta-rhetorically to create evocative characters – evolved into using elision meta-rhetorically to shape entire plots. Elision, another popular rhetorical device that Shakespeare relied on throughout his career was also included in George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie*. Whereas paralipsis introduces a single item before dismissing it for effect, elision is “the action of dropping out or suppressing a passage in a book or connecting links in discourse” (“Elision,” *OED*). Shakespeare, never one to stop experimenting, seems to have continued pushing the bounds of the meta-rhetorical and evolved from creating paralipitic characters to elided plots.

Russ McDonald, author of *Shakespeare's Late Style* (2006), a follow-up to his *Shakespeare and the Arts of Language* that was discussed in chapter two of this thesis, observes the symbiosis of elision and the dramatic romance plays that Shakespeare wrote at the end of his career. McDonald defines romance as “that famously episodic form that skips over great gaps of time, neglects logical connections in favor of less predictable sorts of juxtaposition and sequence, and regularly withholds satisfactory accounts of human motive or supernatural influence. The theatrical spectator is required to fill in gaps, to ignore or forgive unclear sequences and logical faults in the structure...” (*Late* 80).

In *Shakespeare's Late Style*, McDonald continues the thesis he set forth in his earlier book, and he uses a line from Frank Kermode to link together his two treatises on Shakespeare's use of linguistic principles in creating characters, plots, and themes: "[Shakespeare's] later language, and so his theatre, does not lose all contact with the eloquence of his early work, but moves deliberately in the direction of a kind of reticence that might... be thought close to silence" (qtd. in McDonald 81). In his first book, *Shakespeare and the Arts of Language*, McDonald acknowledges an "infrequency of references to the late plays, *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, [and] *The Tempest*" (188). Instead, he endeavors in that text to show the myriad ways that Shakespeare's language and rhetoric develops, particularly in the early half of his career. McDonald's observation is that Shakespeare spends his first several years as a playwright indulging in verbal excess and exhibitions of rhetorical extravagance, and as he matures, McDonald suggests that Shakespeare develops "an expanded and more subtle view of the art [of rhetoric]" (46). Again, McDonald is one of the first critics to notice Shakespeare applying rhetorical principles beyond the rhetorical level, influencing his development of character and later plot.

When he quotes Kermode in *Shakespeare's Late Style*, McDonald calls attention to Shakespeare's total stylistic transformation, from one of a verbose and showy playwright in his early career to the "reticence that might... be thought close to silence" at the end of his career. In fact, a large portion of McDonald's second book, *Shakespeare's Late Style*, is "devoted to what Shakespeare leaves out" (81) of his final plays. As early as *Macbeth*, McDonald observes "a single quality, an essential property of the late style," and that is "the speed of thought, the celerity with which our minds are

expected to process multiple poetic effects and ideas... [as] Shakespeare supplies fewer details... and expects the audience to make the transference more rapidly.” Shakespeare, McDonald continues, “barely introduces [a] figure before moving quickly to another and perhaps still another. We ourselves are expected to register [them]... and then pass immediately to another demanding figure” (36). Here we can see what Shakespeare started with paralipsis – including one gap that causes audiences and readers to make symbolic inferences – has grown into something far more elusive, suggestive, and abstract. With this in mind, an examination of a paraliptic Hecate, Seyton, Third Murder, Cymbeline, or Pericles seems less intriguing than an examination of an elided *Macbeth*, *Cymbeline*, or *Pericles*.

After having experimented successfully with paraliptic characters, Shakespeare saw more opportunity to, in McDonald’s estimation, calibrate “dramatic speech to the content and shape of the narrative being staged.” In other words, “parallels between speech and structure are not merely resemblances but manifestations in different registers” (27). Rhetorical and grammatical features of Shakespeare’s language in his late plays equate to “thematic potential” (32), and as Anne Barton observed of the late plays, “Shakespeare has adjusted his language and dramatic art to the demands of a new mode: one in which plot, on the whole, has become more vivid and emotionally charged than character” (qtd. in McDonald, *Late* 34). In the last third of his career, one gets the sense that paralipsis and characters no longer excited Shakespeare, but elision and plot did.

Just as this thesis aims to take part in the current resurgence of character criticism, it also attempts to add to the existing analysis of Shakespeare’s use of meta-rhetorical principles, and through an analysis of Shakespeare’s paraliptic characters, I have

attempted to bear out McDonald's claims and strengthen the bridge between Shakespeare's early rhetorical extravagance detailed in *Shakespeare and the Arts of Language* and his gaping elisions outlined in *Shakespeare's Late Style*. As a heretofore unexamined aspect of Shakespeare's development as a playwright, paralytic characters serve as a missing puzzle piece, springing out of Shakespeare's early rhetorical indulgences and spawning Shakespeare's meta-rhetorical elided plots. Shakespeare, who always excelled in character-creation and rhetoric, saw an opportunity with Falstaff in *Henry V*, Cicero in *Julius Caesar*, Fortinbras in *Hamlet*, and the Fool in *King Lear* to blend the two, not only taking his plays to a more sophisticated and cerebral level, but also his art.

## Endnotes

1. Truly the “locus classicus,” Morgann’s essay proposed the idea of reading inferentially into the gaps of Shakespeare’s characters, and this spawned what would later become the practice of character criticism. Though it is mostly a defense of Falstaff’s courage, *An Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff* is remembered much more for its influence on later generations of critics from the Romantics through A.C. Bradley.

2. *Paralipsis*, from the Greek *paraleipsis*, means “a leaving to one side.”

3. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from Shakespeare’s plays are taken from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G Blakemore Evans and J.J.M. Tobin (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1996).

4. Throughout her book, Joseph gives many examples of paralipsis in Shakespeare’s plays.

5. Starting on page 10, Enterline uses this term throughout her book to describe moments when the principles behind rhetorical devices would manifest beyond a linguistic plane in Shakespeare’s education or in his work. Oftentimes in classroom activities or in Shakespeare’s characters, certain actions, emotions, expressions, deliveries, and motivations were informed by rhetorical principles that had been embodied through years of rigorous grammar school education.

6. Though there is no consensus on whether *The Merry Wives of Windsor* was written before or after *Henry V*, recent scholarship has challenged the long-standing belief that *The Merry Wives of Windsor* was written after the completion of the *Henriad*. Executing a stylometric analysis, Douglas Bruster and Geneviève Smith boldly argue in “A New Chronology for Shakespeare’s Plays,” published in *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* ([December, 2014]: 1-20.), that *The Merry Wives of Windsor* was composed between *1 Henry IV* and *2 Henry IV*.

7. Gerald Eades Bentley, *Shakespeare and Jonson: Their Reputations in the Seventeenth Century Compared – Two Volumes in One* 1945 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969) In this book, Bentley points out that Jonson’s reputation as a playwright far exceeded Shakespeare’s until the late 1600s; however, in comparing the popularity of their characters, Bentley discovered that, overwhelmingly, Shakespeare’s characters had always been significantly more popular and carried more cultural currency than any of Jonson’s creations. Falstaff is mentioned twice as many times as any of Shakespeare’s other characters or Jonson’s characters. “This fact ought to surprise no

reader familiar with the literature of the time, but the overwhelming dominance of [Falstaff's] position has perhaps not been so obvious" (119), observed Bentley. "They are, for the most part, passing references obviously intended to enlighten the reader by a comparison or to amuse him by reminding him of the escapades or characteristics of Shakespeare's fat knight. . . . reveal[ing] an affectionate familiarity with Falstaff which is not generally found in the allusions to other characters" (121-2).

Bentley's count of seventeenth century correspondents, writers, and poets who made reference to Falstaff reached 131. The next in popularity was Othello in a distant second with fifty-five. Jonson's most referenced character was Doll Common from *The Alchemist* with twenty-one references; however, she lags behind seven of Shakespeare's more prominent characters. With Falstaff being so popular, it is no wonder that he was Shakespeare's only character, according to legend, to have been so adored by Queen Elizabeth that she requested a special play be written about him falling in love, thus resulting in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

8. See Kaye's "Murder Most Foul: Poison as a Gendered Weapon in Shakespeare," *The Shakespeare Institute Review: Shakespeare, Death & Morality* (June, 2012: 18-26), and consider David P. Gontar's rebuttal "Shakespeare's Sweet Poison," *New English Review* (February, 2014).

9. Frye 118. "On the heath the Fool's role is largely taken over by Poor Tom... [and Edgar] seems to be acting as a kind of lightning rod, focusing and objectifying the chaos that is both Lear's mind and in nature. He's holding a mirror up to Lear's growing madness."

10. Foakes, *Hamlet versus Lear* 199. "Edgar displaces the Fool as nearest to Lear, and takes Lear's attention away from himself as he becomes the King's 'philosopher.'"

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